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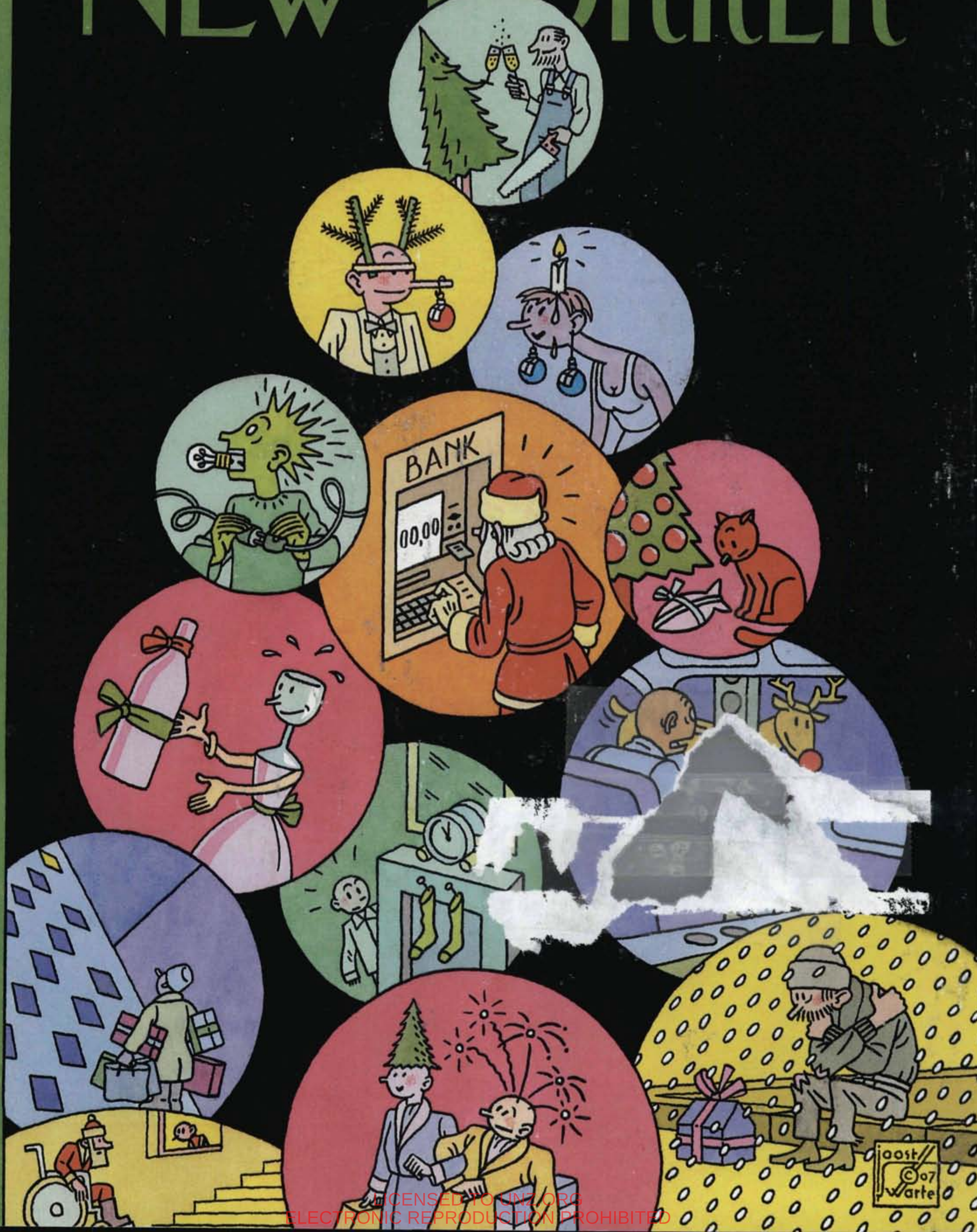
DEC. 10, 2007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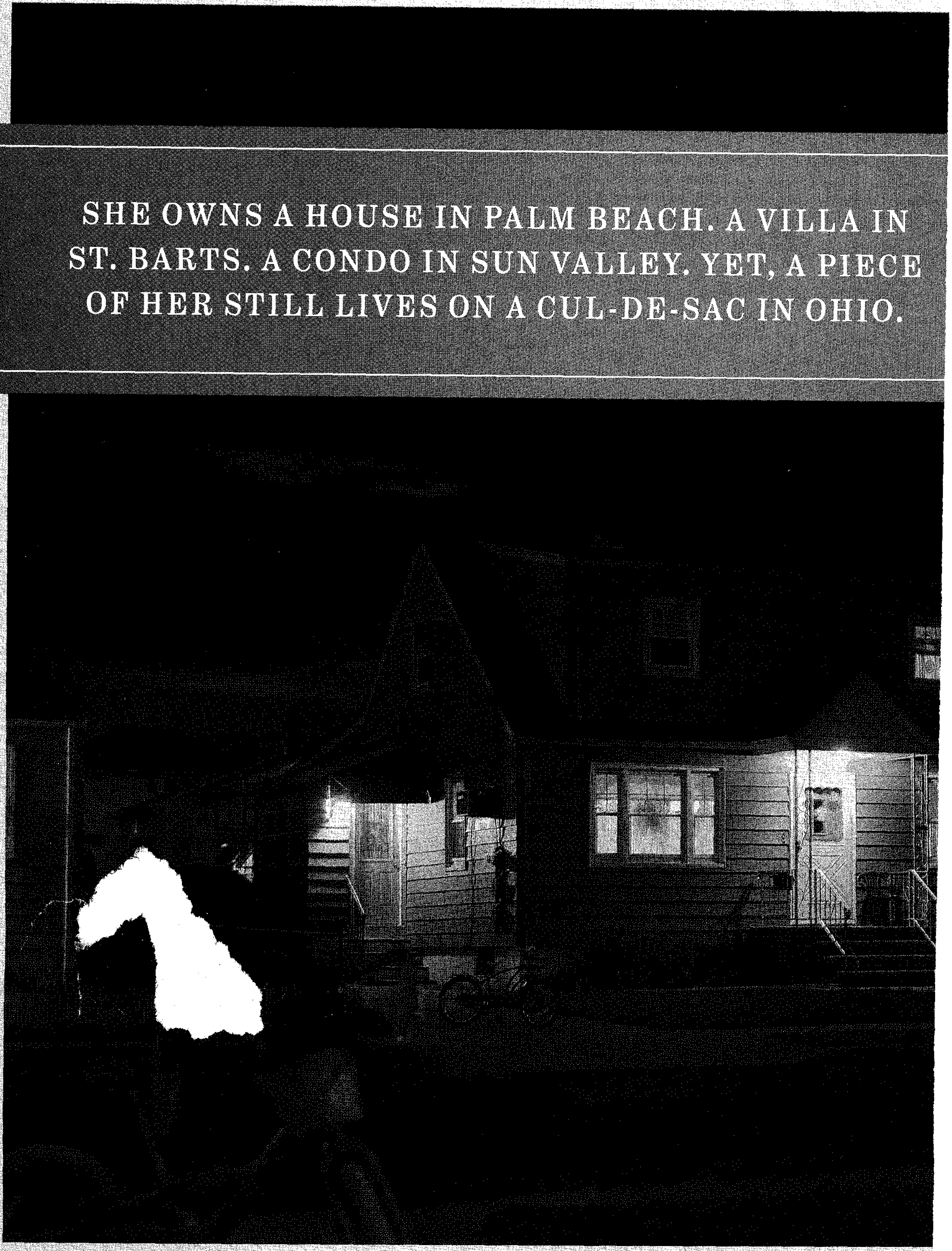

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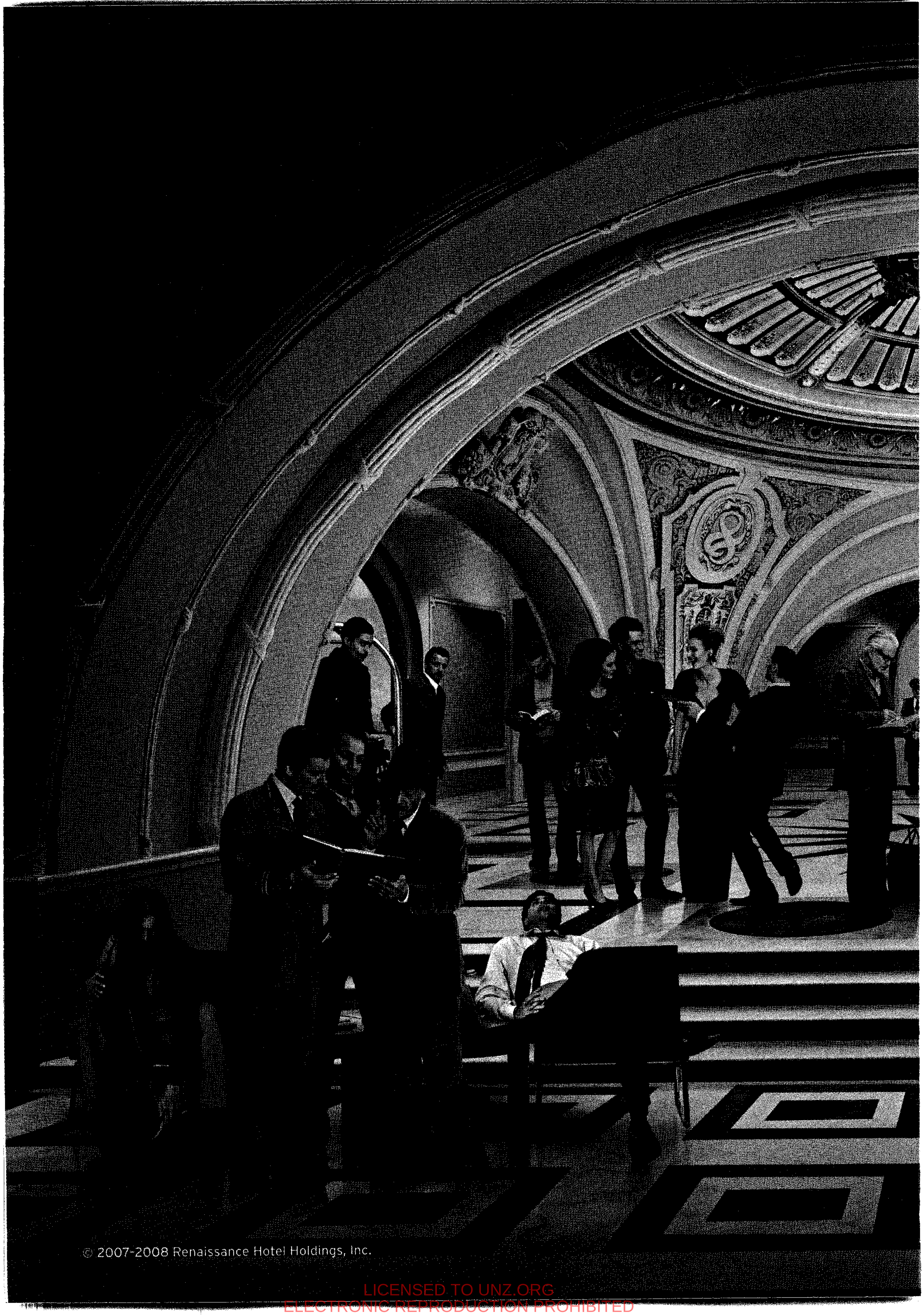

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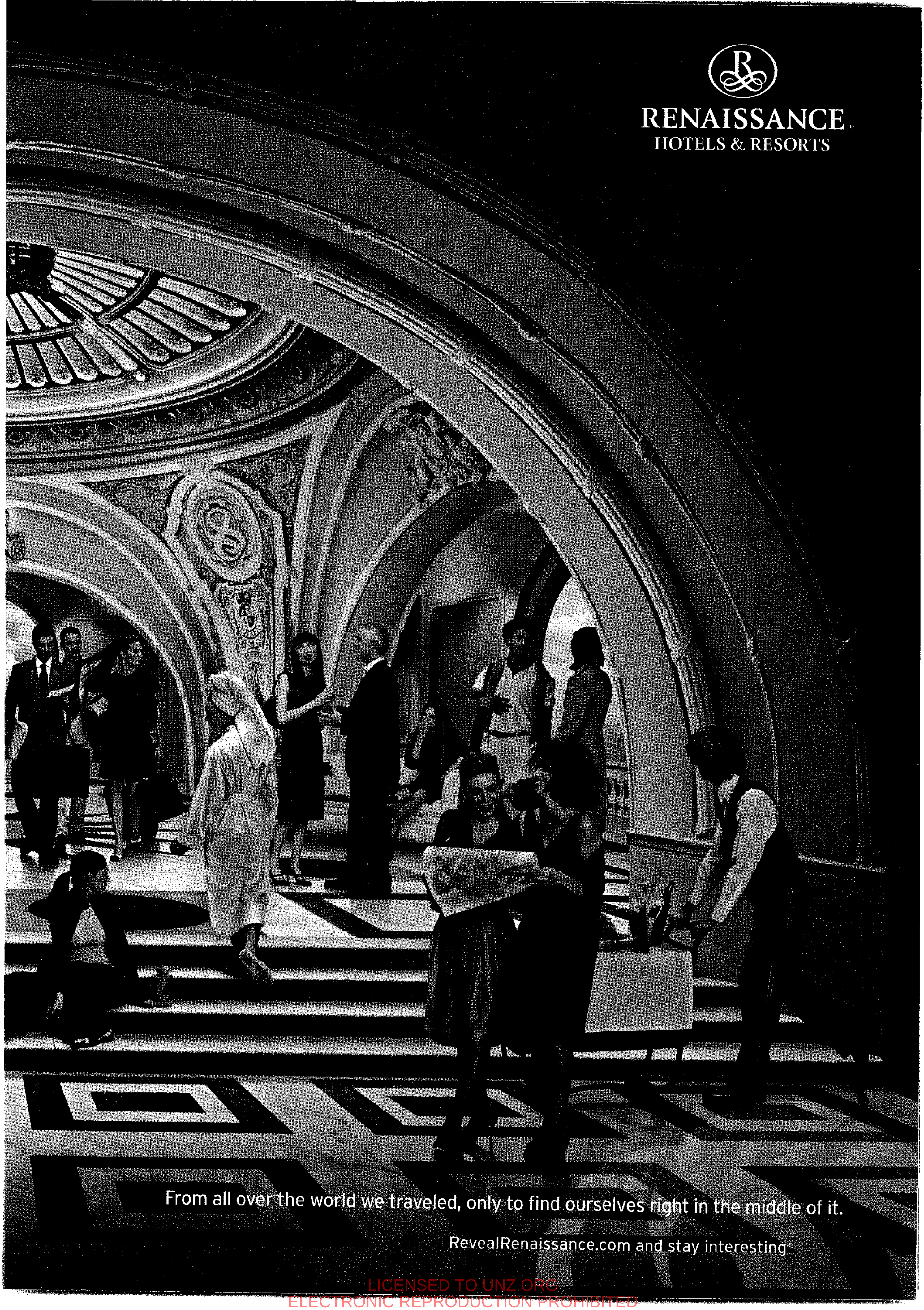
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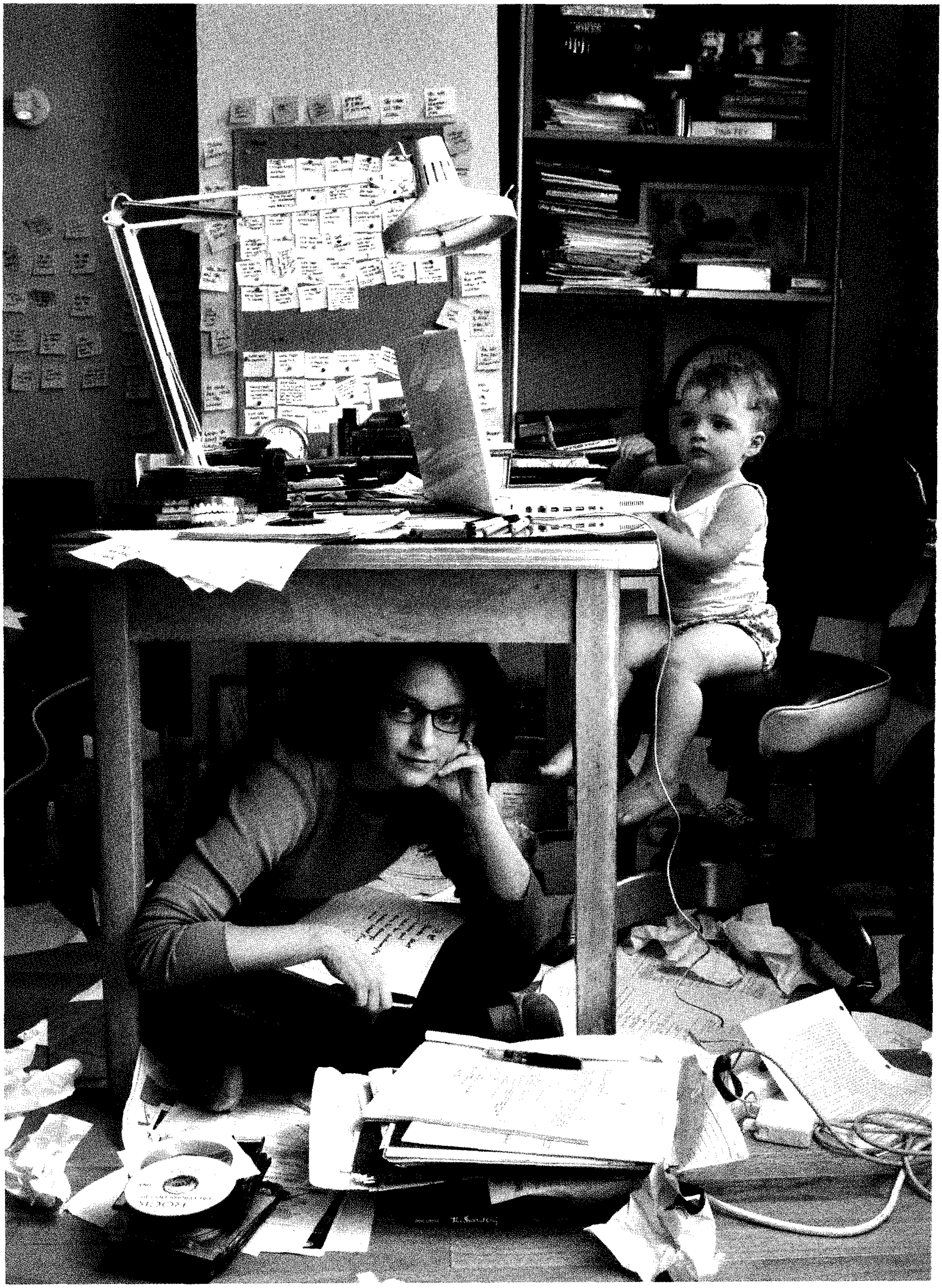

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THE NEW YORKER

DECEMBER 10, 2007

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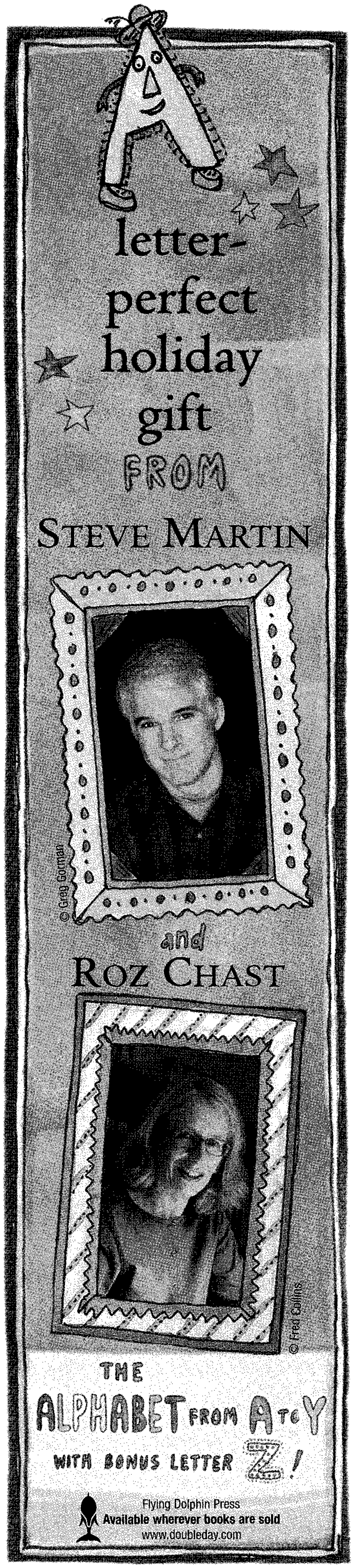
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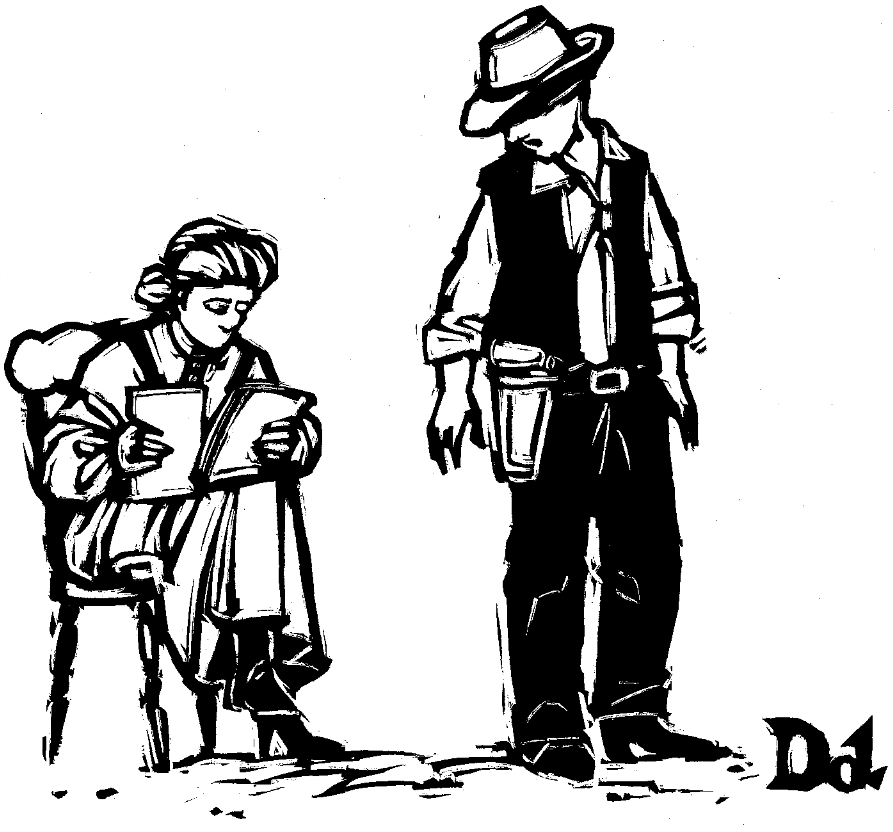
SPOTS *Richard McGuire*



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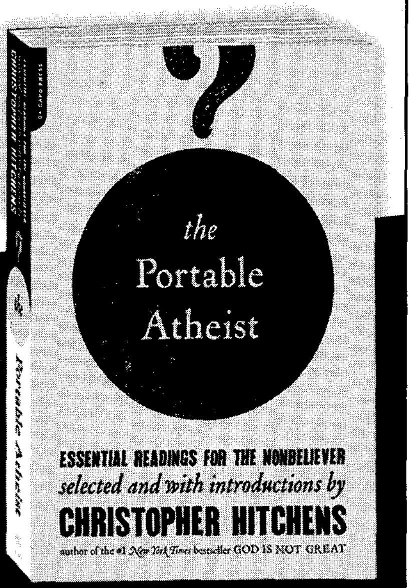
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Kevin Young (Poem, p. 104) has published five collections of poems, including "For the Confederate Dead," which won the 2007 Quill Award in Poetry.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Nick Paumgarten discusses Eliot Spitzer's freshman year in Albany. / *Hendrik Hertzberg* and *Dorothy Wickenden* talk about humor in politics on the Campaign Trail podcast. / *Ken Auletta* leads a conversation about the Web and the Presidential race, with Arianna Huffington, Peter Daou, and Mark McKinnon. / Blogs by *George Packer*, *Dana Goodyear*, and *Sasha Frere-Jones*. / From the archives: *John Cassidy* on Eliot Spitzer, *Hilton Als* on Cat Power, and *John Updike* on the novel "Atonement." / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.

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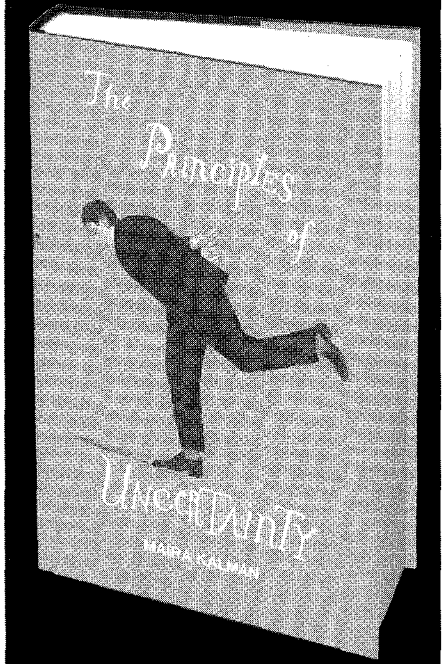

"A SERENDIPITOUS ROMP THROUGH THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD...WHAT EMERGES IS THE FANCY AND RICHNESS OF KALMAN'S VISION, ONE INFORMED BY UNBOUNDED CURIOSITY."
–VANITY FAIR

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BY THE BOOK

Anthony Grafton makes clear, in his article on projects to scan thousands of books, that the notion of a digitized "universal library" has sufficient practical impediments to prevent its realization anytime soon ("Future Reading," November 5th). And even if every hurdle—technical, legal, and political—could be overcome, important information obtainable only through the examination of the physical book itself would be lost to anyone relying on digitized text. The underlying issue, though, is whether the ultimate manifestation of "digitized knowledge"—all the world's books becoming, as Kevin Kelly of *Wired* put it, "a single liquid fabric of interconnected words and ideas"—might be a facile and dangerous corruption of the intellectual process. Kelly's notion of an indiscriminate meld of "all texts—past and present, multilingual—on a particular subject" is a retrograde procedure, a reversal of the process of discrimination, which has, over time, weighed, classified, and organized the vast body of unrefined data to distill a finite yet evolving body of knowledge. This knowledge is contained in a relatively small number of texts that have survived scrutiny and earned distinction. And only when these few texts are taken up by people of intellect, weighed by them in context, and put by them in perspective is the tiny nugget representing human wisdom exposed to view.
M. C. Lang
New York City

After considering the pros and cons of digitization, Grafton mentions in passing that printed books will still be indispensable: "If you want to know what one of Coleridge's annotated books or an early 'Spider-Man' comic really looks and feels like, or if you just want to *read* one of those millions of books which are being digitized, you still have to do it the old way, and you will have to for decades to come" (italics mine). The criterion of sheer accessibility has in effect replaced the notion of usability; books have been turned into databases. They are no longer texts to be read, understood, pondered, and possibly enjoyed, meditated upon, or discussed but files containing data. As texts are turned into pixels, books have become simultaneously images and index: collections of photographs of pages and of disconnected units that we still call words. Maybe the problem is not so much the inaccuracy of the text-conversion of scans of pages but, rather, the premise that matter does not matter, that the medium—screen or paper—is indifferent to our engagement with and understanding of a given text.
Cécile Alduy
Assistant Professor of French
Stanford University
Stanford, Calif.

While Grafton's reservations about putting knowledge online are well taken, I would also point out that there is quite a bit going on now in the academic world that doesn't have much to do with old books. Indeed, as the author of many books, I wonder whether perhaps the book is not quite sacred as a means of disseminating knowledge. What is the most effective way to produce and disseminate knowledge with today's technology? How can we best structure what we know and learn so that students, researchers, and scholars of the future can best understand the work of today's researchers and scholars? I think that questions like these are more important and more difficult to address than whether we can put the contents of libraries on the Web.
Robert Sedgewick
Department of Computer Science
Princeton University
Princeton, N.J.

•

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"Queens Boulevard (The Musical)." Photograph by Gus Powell.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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9	10	11	5	6	7	8

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
52ND STREET

The 52nd Street Project enlists local theatre professionals to mentor children living in Hell's Kitchen in the creation of new works. Nine of these short plays will be performed at the American Theatre of Actors by a cast that includes Frances McDormand and Jessica Hecht. (See page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE
BRIGHT LIGHTS

The Hasidic reggae performer Matisyahu (né Matthew Miller) celebrates Hanukkah with a series of concerts, starting with two nights at Roseland, where he'll be joined by Blues Traveler and the Wailers, and then moving to Warsaw, in Brooklyn, where he'll share the stage with the soul vocalist Ryan Shaw and others. (See page 18.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
MILLER THRILLER

Who else but George Steel, Miller Theatre's intrepid intendant, would mount the New York stage première of "What Next?," Elliott Carter's only opera? The work, in which six characters sort out their lives after a car accident, will receive four performances (the last will take place on December 11, the composer's ninety-ninth birthday). (See page 28.)

MOVIES
HOCUS FOCUS

Moving Image presents a weekend of film programs for children, centered on an illustrated presentation by the writer Brian Selznick of his book "The Invention of Hugo Cabret," a children's novel about the later years of the primordial screen magician Georges Méliès. Also featured are Charlie Chaplin's "The Kid" and Jean Vigo's "Zero for Conduct," as well as a flip-book workshop. (See page 34.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
HOLIDAY FARE

The Morgan Library celebrates the season on Friday, with a concert of holiday music by singers from the Mannes College of Music, and on Sunday, with a series of family activities, including a marionette show, cotillion dancing, and a paper-doll-making workshop. (See page 36.)

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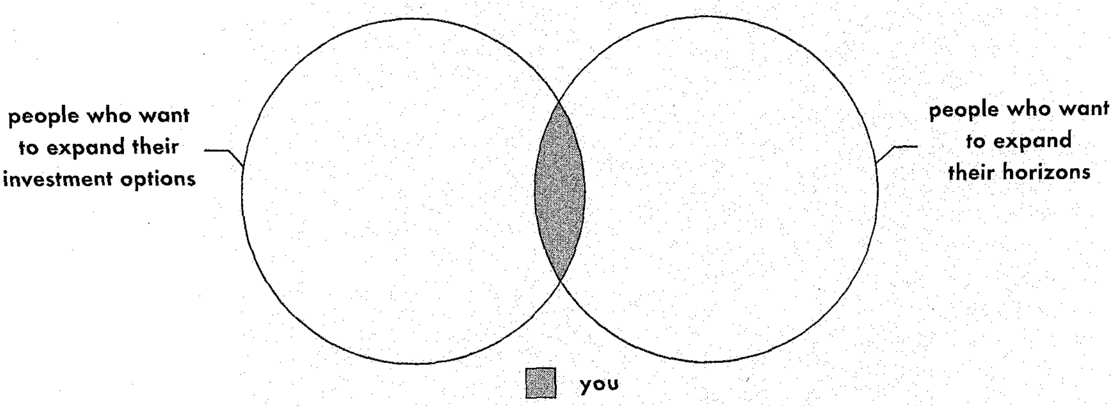
BROADENING PERSPECTIVES



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
IN-BETWEEN DAYS

The cultural and political upheavals during the period covered in "Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945," currently at the Guggenheim, generated art that was unsettled and unsettling. Anxiety, excitement, and a sense that the old rules no longer applied spurred the sort of formal experimentation that came to define modernism.

COURTESY FRANTIŠEK DRTIKOL/MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE ARTS, PRAGUE

Images were skewed, sandwiched, or shattered; radically cropped, utterly abstracted, or cut up and collaged. Photography remained an important recording device as the region careened into fascism and war, but its subjectivity and artfulness were especially apparent. The German, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Austrian photographers gathered here were among the period's most sensitive barometers of change, but they aren't exactly household names, and some of the most interesting—Stanislaw Witkiewicz, Jaromír Funke, Jindřich Štyrský—were dead before the war was over. The survivors, the more famous Martin Munkasci, Josef Sudek, and Hannah Höch, were never more brilliant than in those restless, uncertain years.

—*Vince Aletti*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY
This Steppenwolf transfer by Tracy Letts ("Bug") is about the disappearance of an Oklahoma family man. Opens Dec. 4. (Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BECKETT SHORTS
New York Theatre Workshop puts on four one-act plays by Samuel Beckett: "Act Without Words" I and II, "Eh Joe," and "Rough for Theatre I." Mikhail Baryshnikov stars; Philip Glass provides original music. In previews. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

DELUSION OF THE FURY
Japan Society stages Harry Partch's musical-theatre piece, incorporating two Japanese Noh plays and an Ethiopian folktale. John Jesurun directs. Dec. 4 and Dec. 6-8. (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258.)

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE
Irish Repertory Theatre presents George Bernard Shaw's 1897 melodrama, set during the Revolutionary War. In previews. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

DORIS TO DARLENE, A CAUTIONARY VALENTINE
Jordan Harrison's play interweaves stories from the eighteen-sixties, while Wagner is writing his "Liebestod"; the nineteen-sixties, when a young woman becomes a pop star; and the present day. In previews. Opens Dec. 11. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

EDWARD THE SECOND
Red Bull Theatre presents Garland Wright's adaptation of the Elizabethan play by Christopher Marlowe, about a profligate young king. Previews begin Dec. 11. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION
Hank Azaria and Jimmi Simpson star in a new play by Aaron Sorkin, about Philo Farnsworth, the boy genius who invented television, and David Sarnoff, the head of R.C.A., who challenged his patent ownership. Des McAnuff directs. Opens Dec. 3. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE 52ND STREET PROJECT: DON'T TREAD ON ME
The not-for-profit organization 52nd Street Project presents nine plays by playwrights ages nine to twelve, performed by a cast that includes Frances McDormand. Performances are free; reservations are required. Dec. 7-9. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-642-5052.)

THE HOMECOMING
Raúl Esparza, Ian McShane, Eve Best, and Michael McKean star in Harold Pinter's Tony-winning play from 1967, about a dysfunctional North London family. Daniel Sullivan directs. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

IS HE DEAD?
Michael Blakemore directs this recently unearthed comedy by Mark Twain, about an artist who fakes his death in the hope of inciting a bidding frenzy for his work. Norbert Leo Butz stars. In previews. Opens Dec. 9. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LITTLE MERMAID
Francesca Zambello directs an adaptation of the film, with a book by Doug Wright and music and lyrics by Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, and Glenn Slater. In previews. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

MAN IS MAN
Paul Binnerts directs Bertolt Brecht's play from 1926, about a porter in colonial India who becomes a soldier. Previews begin Dec. 5. Opens Dec. 10. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

MAUDIE & JANE
Luciano Nattino adapted a Doris Lessing novel for this drama, in which a bag lady persuades a fashion editor to take care of her. Judith Malina and Pat Russell star. In previews. Opens Dec. 7. (Living Theatre, 19 Clinton St. 212-352-3101.)

NO DICE
Nature Theatre of Oklahoma brings a sendup of amateur dinner theatre. Directed by Pavol Liska and Kelly Copper. Previews begin Dec. 6. Opens Dec. 8. (66 White St. 212-868-4444.)

RUNT OF THE LITTER
The former pro football player Bo Eason's semi-autobiographical play, about sibling rivalry in a high-achieving family, premières at 37 Arts. In previews. Opens Dec. 9. (450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE SEAFARER
Conor McPherson's new play, set in Dublin on Christmas Eve, follows two aging brothers, one of whom is blind. The cast includes Ciarán Hinds, Conleth Hill, and David Morse. McPherson directs. In previews. Opens Dec. 6. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

TRUMPERY
A new play by Peter Parnell, set in 1858, in which Charles Darwin is developing his theory of natural selection at the same time that another explorer, thousands of miles away, comes up with the same idea. David Esbjornson directs. Opens Dec. 5. (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

YELLOW FACE
Center Theatre Group co-produced this play by David Henry Hwang, inspired by his protest against the hiring of Jonathan Pryce for the original Broadway production of "Miss Saigon." Leigh Silverman directs. In previews. Opens Dec. 10. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

NOW PLAYING

BARN SERIES FESTIVAL
LAByrinth Theatre Company's annual staged-reading series of new plays in development includes Stephen Belber's "Fault Lines," directed by Lucie Tiberghien, and Rebecca Cohen's "Switzerland," directed by John Gould Rubin. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

BLACK NATIVITY
Classical Theatre of Harlem presents Langston Hughes's gospel play, set in Times Square in 1973. Alfred Preisser directs. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

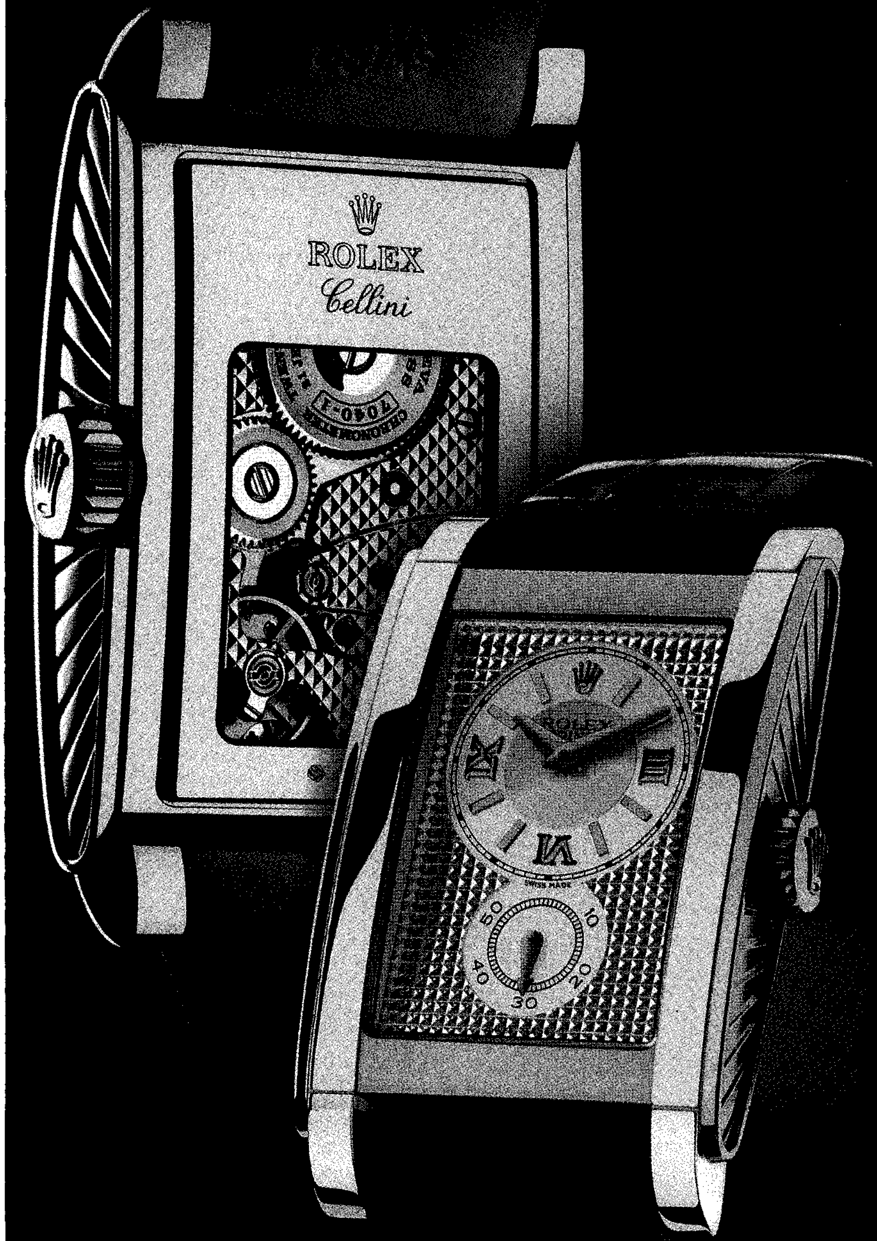
THE CONSTANT COUPLE
Fops, rakes, gentlewomen, and, naturally, hypocrites awaiting their comeuppance populate George Farquhar's seldom performed comedy from 1699. All of London seems to be courting Lady Lurewell (Rachel Botchan), whose abandonment years ago by her first love has left her bitter toward the male sex and eager to stir up trouble. As she enacts schemes upon her suitors, they connive against each other, creating a maze of machinations that allows Farquhar to cast a cool eye on Restoration mores. Jean Randich, who directed the Pearl's lively production, scatters a few loopy modern touches (black lipstick, Heelys) amid the period design but stays true to the puckish heart of Farquhar's satire. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

CYMBELINE
Michael Cerveris, Martha Plimpton, and Phylicia Rashad head the cast of the Shakespeare romance. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS! THE MUSICAL
The classic holiday story, adapted for the stage, returns. Jack O'Brien directs. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

A HARD HEART
Kathleen Chalfant stars in this play by Howard Barker. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Dec. 9.)

OH, THE HUMANITY AND OTHER EXCLAMATIONS
Marisa Tomei stars in the première of a new work by Will Eno, five short plays about everyday life. Jim Simpson directs. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)



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OUR SINATRA
A musical revue featuring the songs of Ol' Blue Eyes returns to New York. (Broadway Comedy Club, 318 W. 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PIANO TEACHER
Mrs. K. (Elizabeth Franz) is an elderly widow whose powerful, selective memory is cluttered to the rafters. And since she is, for the most part, the central force in Julia Cho's well-written new play, we have to take her word for almost everything—at first. Mrs. K. can't let anything out, not even the truth. Still, something compels her to reach out to her former students. The director, Kate Whoriskey, does a clean, credible job when it comes to staging the telephone exchanges between Mrs. K. and her students. She also minimizes the effect of the Tony Award-winning Franz's mannerisms, and draws her out at every turn; in response, Franz offers up a bravura performance. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/3/07.) (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. Through Dec. 9.)

PUMPGIRL
The Irish playwright Abbie Spallen wrote this drama, set in rural Ireland, about a gas-station attendant, the race-car driver she is obsessed with, and his wife. Carolyn Cantor directs. (City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

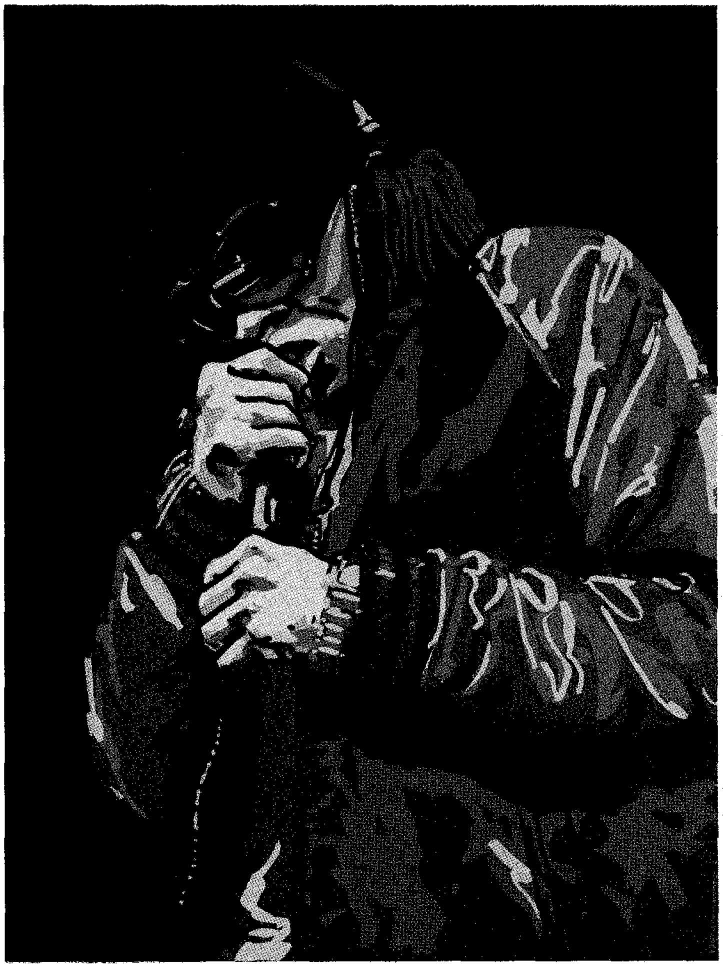
QUEENS BOULEVARD (THE MUSICAL)
Signature Theatre Company presents the première of a musical by Charles Mee, in which a groom gets caught up in the city streets on his wedding day. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

RAG AND BONE
Noah Haidle's play, directed by Sam Gold, features a dexterous cast of Off Broadway regulars who spend much of their energy trying to make emotional sense of a messy magical-realist plot. Two brothers (Michael Chernus and Matthew Stadelmann) run a ladder store that acts as a front for a human-heart-trafficking operation. Meanwhile, a poet (Henry Stram), whose heart has been stolen and inserted into the body of a millionaire (David Wohl), enlists the help of a Faulkner-quoting prostitute (Deirdre O'Connell) and a pimp (Kevin Jackson) to get it back. If all that sounds a little strained, it is. Haidle ("Mr. Marmalade") doesn't give his most evocative ideas room to breathe, crowding them instead with cloying metaphors and self-consciously quirky dialogue. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

REBEL VOICES
Rob Urbinati's stage adaptation of Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove's "Voices of a People's History of the United States." (Reviewed in this issue.) (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BROTHERS SIZE:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. **DAI (ENOUGH):** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **DIE MOMMIE DIE!:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **THE GLORIOUS ONES:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **GONE MISSING:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **HOODOO LOVE:** Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200. Through Dec. 9. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **THE OVERWHELMING:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **PETER AND JERRY:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. **PYGMALION:** American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **THE RECEPTIONIST:** City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **RICHARD III:** Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101. Through Dec. 9. **THE RITZ:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. Through Dec. 9. **ROCK 'N' ROLL:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SECRET ORDER:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Dec. 9. **SPEECH & DEBATE:** Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.


Sly Stone takes the stage at the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Dec. 7: A lot of strange and wonderful things came out of the San Francisco Bay area in the sixties, but nothing was more profoundly moving, and, one could argue, more influential, than the music of **Sly Stone.** Born Sylvester Stewart, he came into the world in Texas and was raised in California, where he propagated a beautifully inventive sonic vision. He revolutionized soul music, mixing in psychedelic, funk, and rock influences, paving the way for Prince, Michael Jackson, and countless other musicians. He secured his place in pop history with an electrifying set at Woodstock and by creating "Everyday People," "Sing a Simple Song," "Stand," "I Want to Take You Higher," and other unforgettable songs, before famously dropping out of the music scene in the late seventies. Lately, however, he's been making live appearances and, reportedly, working on new material. Dec. 8-9: The Australian soft rockers **Air Supply** may be the punch line for many dismissive jokes, but in the early eighties their syrupy ballads earned them big bucks.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Dec. 6: **The Sword.** Emerging from the indie-rock hotbed of Austin, Texas, this four-piece specializes in old-school heavy metal that uncannily recalls Black Sabbath's sonic template. Delivering its lyrics of bloody medieval carnage without even the slightest hint of irony, the Sword strives to burnish the genre's tarnished breastplate. Dec. 7: The singer-songwriter **Elvis Perkins** has a sensibility that's part folk and part pop (he sounds like a cross between Bob Dylan and the Beatles, though, in fact, he's the son of the actor Anthony Perkins and the photographer Berry Berenson). Dec. 8: A holiday show with the rootsy, plainspoken rock band **Marah,** which emerged out of Philadelphia in 1998 with the CD "Let's Cut the Crap and Hook Up Later On Tonight." Since then, they've delivered a number of solid albums and attracted the attention of such heavyweights as Bruce Springsteen and the writer Nick Hornby.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Dec. 6: **Balkan Beat Box,** the world-wandering electronic-music ensemble created by the saxophonist Ori Kaplan and the drummer and producer Tamir Muskat.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Dec. 5: Mick Jones and Tony James are rock royalty, having served in the ranks of British punk stalwarts the Clash and Generation X, respectively. Jones also formed Big Audio Dynamite, and James played in Sigue Sigue Sputnik and the Sisters of Mercy. Not content with their already impressive résumés, these two vets are out to fuse traditional rock aesthetics with newfangled laptop technology with their new band, **Carbon/Silicon.** Dec. 7: The **Dirty Dozen Brass Band** are Crescent City revisionists who put the stomp into everything they play, from Jelly Roll Morton to Michael Jackson. Dec. 8: **Blowoff,** which is Bob Mould and Richard Morel. Mould, once a member of the American punk band Hüsker Dü and of the celebrated alternative trio Sugar, took a break from music at the end of the nineties to fulfill his passion for professional wrestling. (No joke: he has served as a consultant to the World Championship Wrestling organization.) More recently, he started experimenting with electronic music, swapping guitars for samplers and synthesizers. These days, he can often be found at the 9:30 Club, in Washington, D.C., spinning records with Morel, a producer who has remixed albums by the Pet Shop Boys, Depeche Mode, New Order, the Killers, and many others.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Dec. 10: **Kelly Joe Phelps** is a lapsed jazz guitarist who now plays acoustic country blues. Dec. 11: The neo-folkie **Mike Errico** rings in the holidays.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—Dec. 4-5: The Hasidic reggae performer **Matisyahu** was born on the 5th of Tamuz, 5739 (or June 30, 1979), as Matthew Miller. After a youth spent in Westchester, a spell following the jam band Phish, and

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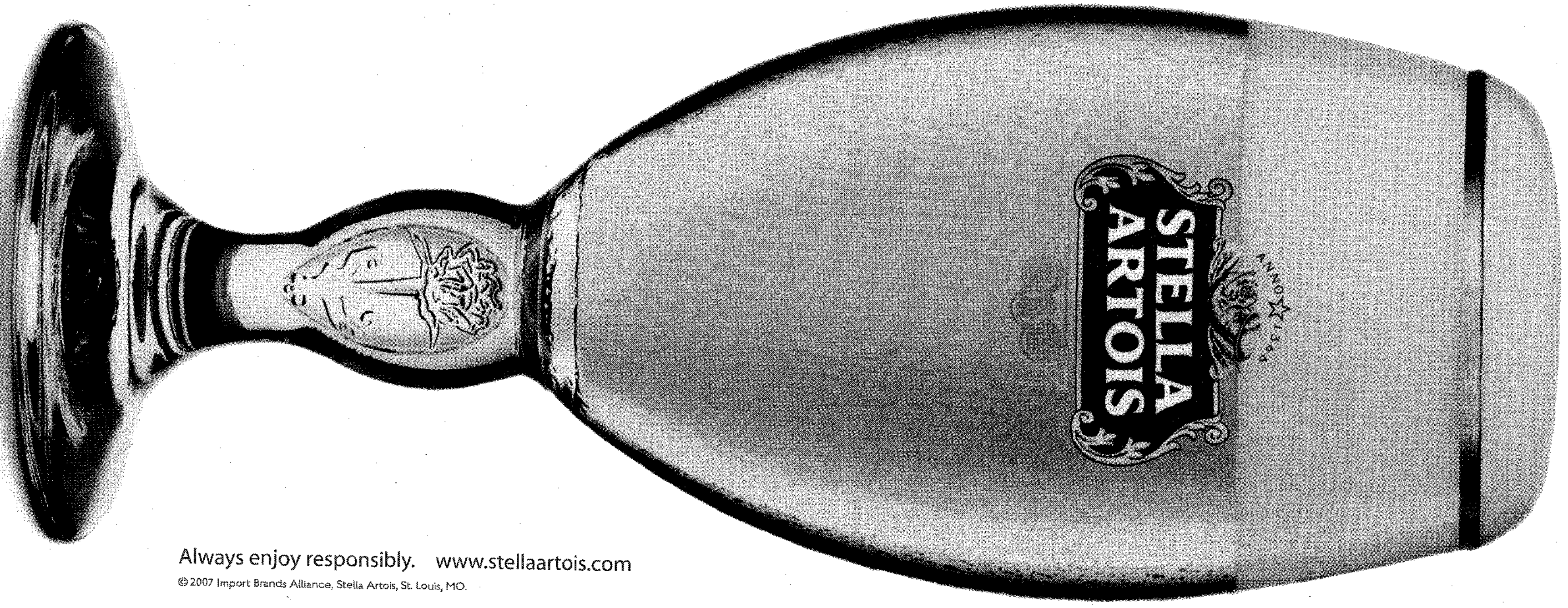

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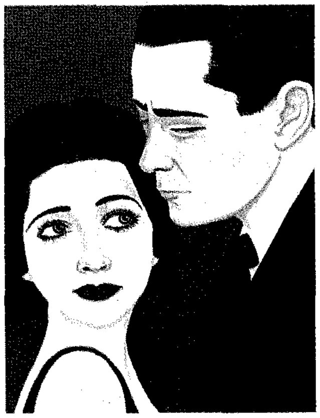
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SOCIAL X-RAYS

Venice, moonlight, "O Sole Mio," and a swaying boatload of garbage: it has to be Lubitsch. Two minutes into "Trouble in Paradise" and already you have the delicious sensation of being preyed upon by the most reliable trickster in cinema—the man who knew enough of trashy emotions and unscrupulous crimes to pass them off as perfume and pearls. This comedy, from 1932, may be his most dapper and daring endeavor: the tale of two crooks (Herbert Marshall and Miriam Hopkins) who steal from each other by way of titillation, then turn their attention to a French heiress (Kay Francis) who needs to be stripped bare of her millions. Never have romance and cynicism seemed like better bedfellows, as when Francis declares, "Marriage is a beautiful mistake which two people make together." Thanks to its flawless Art Deco design, the movie (screening at MOMA on Dec. 6) should be the ideal way both to celebrate and scorn Christmas overspending: can you really not live without that ashtray in the shape of a silver gondola?

—*Anthony Lane*



DIVYA SRINIVASAN

an epiphany in the Colorado Rockies, he visited Israel and found Jah. Here he celebrates the festival of lights, with **Blues Traveler** on the first night and the **Wailers** on the second. (See also Warsaw, below).

TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-260-4700)—Dec. 8: After the bittersweet tease of seeing Pink Floyd reconvene in the summer of 2005 for the "Live 8" concert, the fabled art-rock ensemble has given no indication that a proper reunion will ever happen. **Australian Pink Floyd**—a top-drawer tribute act whose name would make a clever ironic indie-rock band moniker but actually tells you all you need to know about them—bravely steps into the breach, replicating the band's signature sprawling opuses with aplomb.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (212-307-7171)—Dec. 6 and Dec. 8: **Matisyahu** (see Roseland) continues his Hanukkah celebration with **Ryan Shaw** and **Trevor Hall** on the first night and **Zox** and **Joseph Israel** on the second.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Dec. 5: **Ted Leo and the Pharmacists.** Leo, a veteran of the fertile eighties hardcore scene in Washington, D.C., sings intricately worded songs that are as kinetic and catchy as they are whip smart. Dec. 8: The Israeli hip-hop act **Hadag Nachash** headlines a show that's part of "The Eight," an international Hanukkah concert à la "Live Earth" that's taking place around the globe. (For more information, visit www.goeight.com.) Dec. 9: **José González,** who was born in Sweden to Argentinean parents, plays the acoustic guitar with commanding grace and sings, in English, sultry songs that are sad and uplifting at the same time.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Jan. 12: **Andrea Marcovicci** relies on a surplus of charm, wit, and insider knowledge; here, she performs a program of the imperishable songs of Rodgers and Hart.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Dec. 5-6: **Christine Ebersole.** The revered star of the Broadway show "Grey Gardens" brings her vast vocal skills to a more compact stage, with support from the M.V.P. of the cabaret world, the pianist and singer **Billy Stritch.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Dec. 4-9: Last year's collective recording from the guitarist **Bill Frisell,** the bassist **Ron Carter,** and the drummer **Paul Motian** was as rewarding as the A-list talent promised; their début as a live band should be equally satisfying.

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through Dec. 31: The singer **Steve Tyrell** hits town to turn on the holiday charm. On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddy Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the pianist and vocalist **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Dec. 5-9: The reunion of two former longtime bandmates, the saxophonist **Joe Lovano** and the trumpeter **Tom Harrell,** is cause for celebration. Joining them for a tribute to John Coltrane will be the master drummer **Jimmy Cobb,** the last man standing from the recording "Kind of Blue." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Dec. 6-8: Yuletide classics meet New Orleans energy as **Wynton Marsalis** and friends heat up the season with the concert "Red Hot Holiday Stomp."

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Dec. 5-9: Of the generation of new-jazz players that sprung up in the eighties, few squared avant-garde tendencies with traditional values the way **Bennie Wallace** did. Here the brawny-toned tenor saxophonist takes the helm of a large ensemble to pay tribute to the patriarch of the instrument, Coleman Hawkins.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—The peripatetic trumpeter **Dave Douglas** has shaken things up within his popular quintet (here Dec. 4-9), with the addition of **Orrin Evans** on electric piano and **Eric Revis** on bass. His mainstays, the drummer **Clarence Penn** and the saxophonist **Donny McCaslin,** remain on board. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Dec. 6: The vibraphonist and pianist **Karl Berger** has been an outspoken advocate for inclusive jazz since the sixties. The accordion virtuoso **Jean-Louis Matinier** joins him for a program of original material. The bassist **John Lindberg,** the vocalist **Ingrid Sertso,** and the cellist **Tomas Ulrich** will also be on hand. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Age of Rembrandt."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary."** Through March 2. ♦ **"The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece."** Through Jan. 13. ♦ **"Tara Donovan."** Through April 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

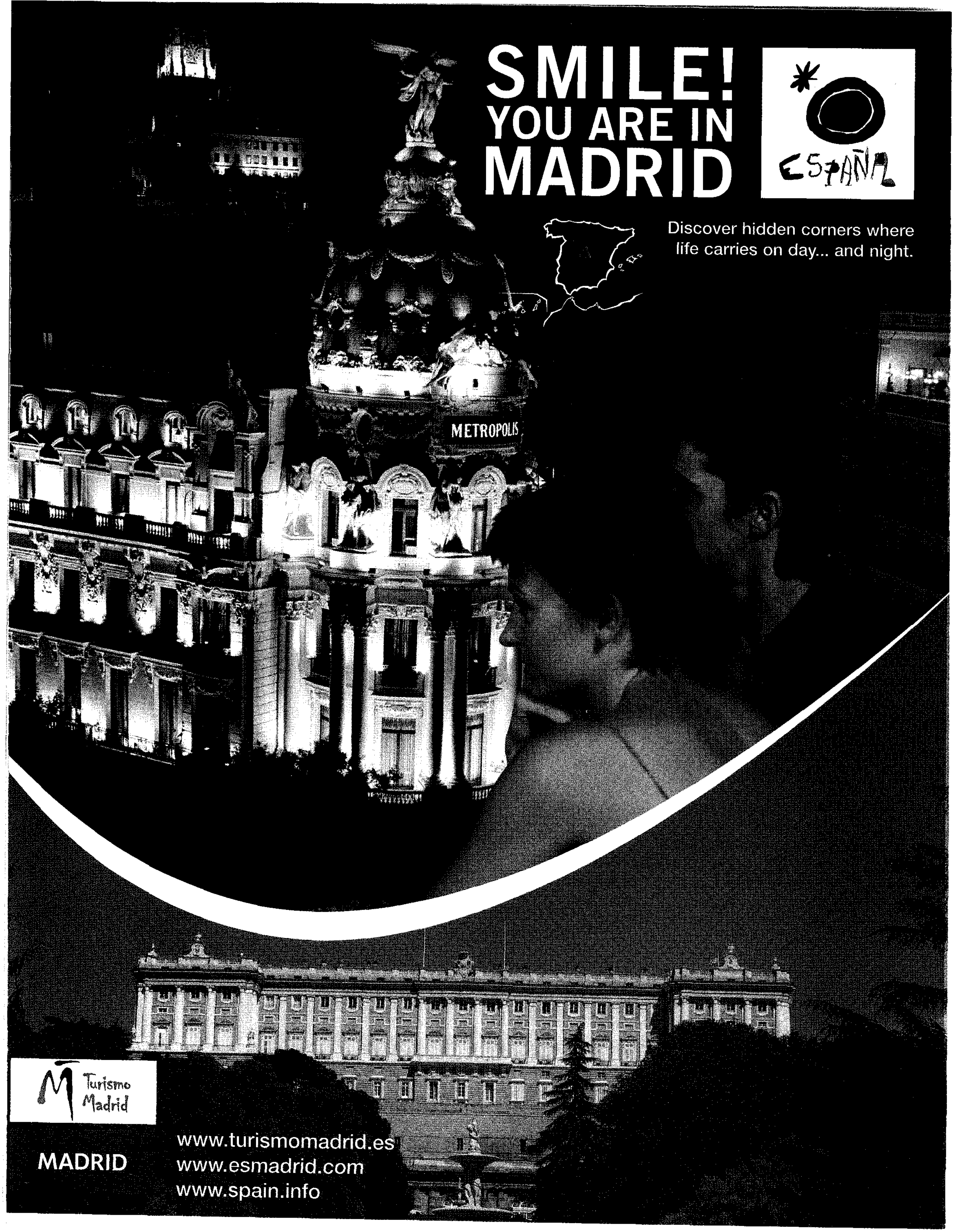
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Martin Puryear."** Through Jan. 14, 2008. ♦ **"Georges Seurat: The Drawings."** Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"New Perspectives in Latin American Art, 1930-2006: Selections from a Decade of Acquisitions."** Through Feb. 25. ♦ **"Projects 86: Gert & Uwe Tobias."** Through Feb. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Richard Prince: Spiritual America."** Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945."** Through Jan. 13. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Lawrence Weiner: As Far As the Eye Can See."** Through Feb. 10. ♦ **"Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love."** Through Feb. 3. ♦ **"Beth Campbell: Following Room."** Opens Dec. 7. ♦ **"Jacob Lawrence's 'Migration Series': Selections from the Phillips Collection."** Through Jan. 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art."** Through Jan. 27. ♦ **"Brushed with Light: American Landscape Watercolors from the Collection."** Through Jan. 27. ♦ **"Global Feminisms Remix."** Through Feb. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—It covers three-quarters of the earth's surface and makes up sixty per cent of our body weight; without it we die: how to summarize water? **"Water: H_2O = Life"** is, paradoxically, somewhat dry, relying on text panels and interactive exhibits in which you press a button (to move a virtual polar bear across the melting ice pack) or push a lever (to dam and then free a model river). Still, the facts alone are astonishing. Organisms called tardigrades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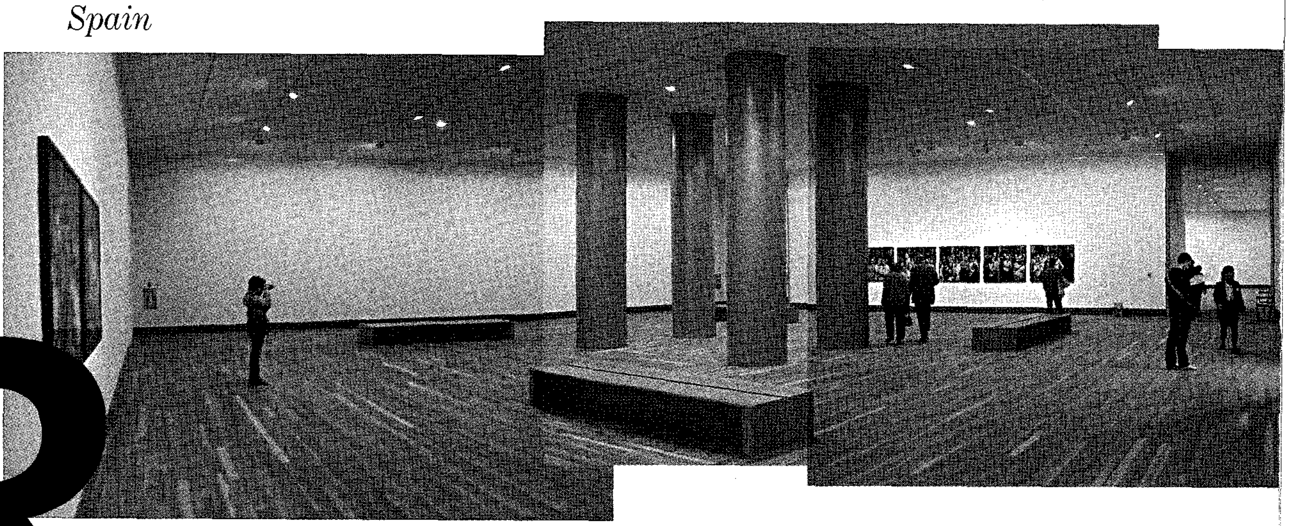


R el in Madrid

Spain's lively, cosmopolitan capital has a well-earned reputation for offering some of Europe's best night life and cuisine. Revelers from around the world come to celebrate in style at the city's avant-garde dance clubs, intimate bars, chic restaurants, and romantic cafés.

The customary way to kick off an evening is with cocktails and tapas, small dishes of olives, cheese, sausages, and other specialties that sate the appetite before notoriously nocturnal Madrileños eat dinner. Some of Madrid's most popular tapas restaurants are along Calle Cava Baja just south of the Plaza Mayor, where **Taberna Tempranillo** serves these typical treats. **El Bocaíto** in the bohemian Chueca neighborhood is another favorite destination on the tapeo—a multi-stop tapas feast.

After barhopping, friends meet for a leisurely dinner, often not until after 9 P.M. Choosing a restaurant may be one of the tougher decisions of the evening, but a few notable options are **La Broche**, which offers a creative twist on Catalan cooking, **El Amparo**, a Basque favorite, and **Viejo Madrid**, known for its traditional Spanish cuisine.

Besides its vibrant dining scene, Madrid offers a wide range of cultural activities. The prestigious **Teatro Real** hosts concerts and operas throughout the year, and **La Plaza de Toros de Las Ventas**, Madrid's legendary bullring, is also a popular venue for rock concerts and shows.

As dinner winds down and performances end, the citywide party moves into high gear. Crowds gather at clubs around midnight, and everyone dresses up to dance until dawn—locals rarely wear jeans or sneakers to bars and clubs. The grand finale to a night on the town is the typical breakfast ritual: thick, hot chocolate and sweet, fried *churros*.

By day, Madrid has exceptional museums to explore. This fall, the **Prado Museum** unveiled its grand new extension, nearly doubling its size. Designed by architect Rafael Moneo, the enlarged Prado features new galleries and even additional buildings that have been incorporated into the museum, including the restored Cloister of the Jerónimos. The Prado is inaugurating the new space with an exhibition featuring nineteenth-century Spanish artists such as Goya, Madrazo, and Sorolla, on view through April 24th.

Also along the Paseo del Prado, the **Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum** has two of the top private collections of twentieth-century art, with works by Titian, Kandinsky, and Rothko among other museum highlights. Completing Madrid's "Golden Triangle of Art," the **Reina Sofia National Art Museum** specializes in Spanish works—Picasso's "Guernica" is part of the permanent collection. Day or night, visitors can revel in the treasures of this multicultural city.

PHOTOS: NEW EXTENSION OF THE PRADO MUSEUM ©ARQTIPO
WINTER TOMATOES ©TSUKASA SHIMMAYO

Visit SPAIN.INFO when planning your trip to Madrid.

live in both salt and fresh water and in droughts can shut down metabolically for years; an acre of broad-leaf forest daily releases some eight thousand gallons of water into the atmosphere; bottled water costs roughly ten dollars per gallon as compared to one cent per gallon from the tap. Through May 26. ♦ For the next eight months, around five hundred specimens will flit through the Butterfly Conservatory, a pocket-size hothouse planted with orchids and other rain-forest flora. Through May 26. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724-1780)."** Through Jan. 27. ♦ The magisterial froufrou of the Frick's Fragonard Room, closed for renovation since June, is receiving visitors again. It looks the same as ever, thank goodness. But you may feel that your eyesight has improved—an effect of new, color-sensitive lighting, which self-adjusts to daylight conditions. The refulgent glamour of Fragonard's suite of paintings, "The Progress of Love" (commissioned by Madame du Barry, who then rejected it, in 1773, as out of fashion), and the lapidary marvels of the attendant furniture, sculpture, ceramics, and bric-a-brac sing a bit more lambently. You might linger extra minutes to pity, anew, the deludedness of people who deem perfection beyond human reach. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"From The New Yorker to Shrek: The Art of William Steig."** Through March 16. ♦ **"Camille Pissarro: Impressions of City and Country."** Through Feb. 3. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"Drawing Connections: Baselitz, Kelly, Penone, Rockburne, and the Old Masters."** Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
40 W. 53rd St. (212-956-3535)—**"Pricked: Extreme Embroidery."** Through March 9. (Open daily, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—The museum inaugurates its new building with **"Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century,"** an international survey of recent sculpture that examines the antiheroic tendency in contemporary art. Through March 23. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"French Founding Father: Lafayette's Return to Washington's America."** Through Aug. 16, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—**"Multiple Interpretations"** is a selection of contemporary prints, conceived in series, that are new to the library's collection. Through Jan. 27. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"Yue Minjun and the Symbolic Smile."** Through Jan. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Kori Newkirk: 1997-2007."** You don't have to strain to see the influence of the elder statesman David Hammons in Newkirk's self-described "ghetto fabulous conceptualism." Like Hammons, Newkirk is a trickster with a taste for oddball materials. Pony beads (the hair accessories made famous by Venus and Serena Williams in their teen-age years) are hung like beaded curtains; elsewhere, hair pomade is used in lieu of pigment. There is a joyful element to Newkirk's work—the videos, particularly—that hinges more on a celebration of blackness than on brooding critique. The mood might have something to do with the setting: Newkirk made a splash in the museum's 2001 "Freestyle" survey, and you feel the love in his return to the institution that championed him—as it has so many other young black artists. Through March 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

DOUGLAS GORDON
The Turner Prize-winning artist, best known for his film manipulations, turns in a new group of works that are even more static than his glacially paced "24 Hour Psycho": partially charred posters of iconic Warhol images mounted on mirror. Marilyns predominate. There's also a Jackie with a burned-out handlebar mustache; a gun-toting triple Elvis looks pocked with bullet holes. Most of the works are shown in a plush-carpeted room painted black; with a large mirrored panel on the ceiling, the gimmicky effect is more disco than jewel box. Through Dec. 15. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313.)

BRIDGET RILEY
New oils and gouaches by the former doyenne of Op art (seen here and in the gallery's West Twenty-fifth Street space) raise her current mode of decorative abstraction to pitches of urbane bliss. She interweaves flamelike scallops and petals of flat color, rhythmically, in panoramic formats. Varied in tone, the flavorsome hues—hot and rosy pinks, lime green, turquoise, periwinkle, manila—are uniformly saturated. They rise to effects of Seurat-like, matter-of-fact radiance. A painting in acrylic, made directly on a wall whose whiteness becomes sectors of the composition, is novel and promising. Were Riley to do murals in public spaces, the world would improve. Through Jan. 5. (PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

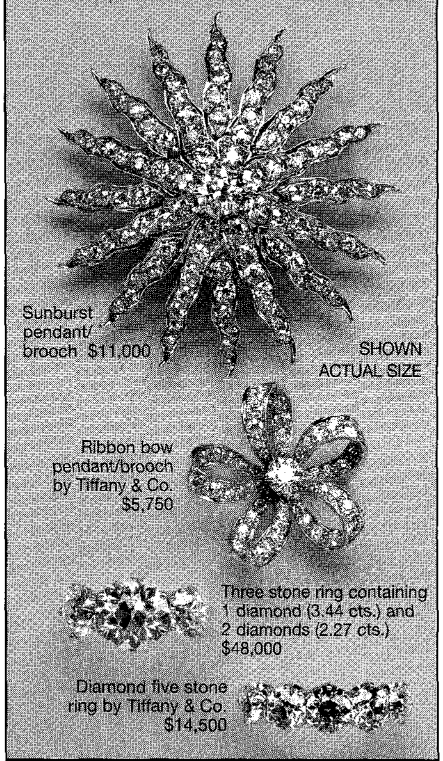
CHRISTOPHER WOOL
Wool is the king of edgy blue-chip, making paintings that retain (or is it feign?) a trace of the street. In these "Pattern Paintings," made between 1987 and 2000, filigree and floral motifs (rather than words, for which he is best known) are laid down on glossy aluminum surfaces with rubber rollers, stencils, silk screen, and, in the case of an exuberant burst of looping graffiti, spray paint. One could spin out Greenbergian theories of flatness, figure, and ground, or see Wool as Warhol redux, repeating his patterns until they become crypto-ironic wallpaper. Through Dec. 15. (Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060.)

Short List

JULES OLITSKI: Knoedler & Company, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through Jan. 5. **TINO SEHGAL:** Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Jan. 5. **"HANSEL AND GRETEL":** Gallery Met, Lincoln Center Plaza, at 65th St. 212-870-7441. Through Feb. 29.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ROBERT BECK
The lights have been lowered from the ceiling to raise the temperature in the room. Text cribbed from a letter written by James Joyce to his wife ("how am I to sign myself?") is scrambled in anagrams written in chalk on the floor. Black-and-white drawings based on personality-assessment tests are packed full of staring eyes, teardrops, and animals—the institutional vibe in the brightly lit room is no accident. There's a link to Surre-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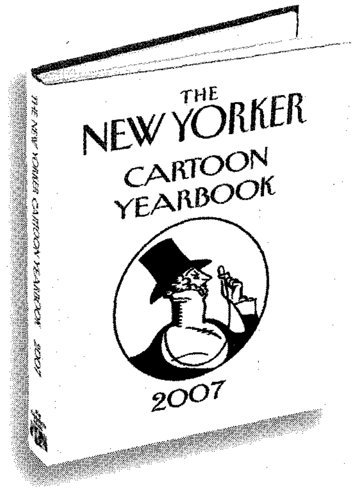

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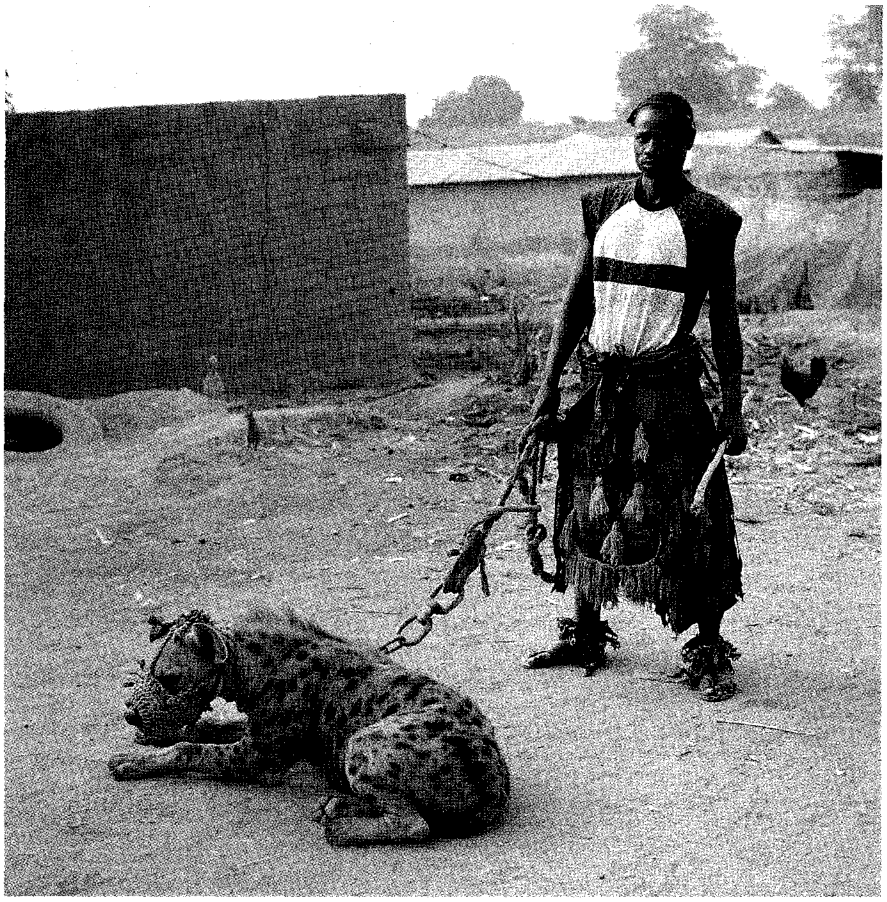


Pieter Hugo's photograph "Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara," at Milo.

alism in the symbolic imagery, and also in the Miró-like flourishes, but Beck takes his project beyond mere homage in this soulful departure from his previous, more strictly appropriationist work. Through Dec. 22. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-229-2766.)

JEREMY BLAKE
When the artist died, last July, at the age of thirty-five, he was at work on a new "time-based painting" (as he called his digital videos), an allusive portrait of the punk impresario Malcolm McLaren titled "Glitterbest." Footage intended for that piece, narrated by McLaren himself, is included in this memorial exhibition, as are drawings and digital C-prints dating back to 1998. Best is the comprehensive screening program of Blake's videos, candy-colored dreamscapes in which color-field abstractions melt into tales of lush decadence (subjects include the swinging-sixties fashion maven Ossie Clark and the rifle heiress Sara Winchester). They're sumptuous paeans to glamour and paranoia. Through Jan. 5. (Kinz, Tillou and Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 212-929-0500.)

RANEE PALONE FLYNN
Flynn's color photos of family, acquaintances, and people she's just met, some of whom have stripped naked, will remind viewers of the work of Katy Grannan, Malerie Marder, Jocelyn Lee, and other women photographers who use their cameras to achieve a delicate and unusual intimacy with their subjects. In Flynn's case, the comfort level varies widely, and the nudes are not always her most revealing pictures. But wariness is treated with measured concern, especially when her young son, shirtless and pale in natural light and shadow, first shies away, then gives in to her intent, loving gaze. Through Dec. 22. (Halpert, 511 W. 25th St. 646-827-9890.)

TAJ FORER
This young American photographer's first New York show is excerpted from his new book, "Threefold Sun," which records impressions from a cross-country trip made in search of communities and individuals influenced by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. Forer's casually matter-of-fact color images don't attempt to explain that philosophy, but they do suggest its peaceful effect on the lives of people living simply and close to the land. Although several of the pictures are portraits (including one of a bearded, bare-chested young farmer in a rakish fedora), resonant still-lifes dominate. Cut-paper hearts decorate a Valentine's Day buffet table; gardening tools at rest on a weathered bench wait to be taken up again. Through Dec. 15. (Milo North, 531 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)

DUANE HANSON
Before there was Ron Mueck or Evan Penny, there was Duane Hanson (1925-1996), the master of hyperrealist figurative sculpture. In a show that functions as a capsule version of his crowd-pleasing 1998 Whitney Museum retrospective, several of his greatest hits are assembled for consideration: "Queenie," the polyester-clad cleaning woman, "Rita the Waitress," and the brilliant "Flea Market Lady," whose tacky teal T-shirt asserts, "I am a big deal." Hanson's sculptures show their age. The pancake makeup and wigs can't compete with Mueck's higher-tech effects, but the figures' uncanny presence and sad-sack, working-class malaise still resonate deeply. Through Dec. 15. (Van de Weghe, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-929-6633.)

CY TWOMBLY
Think of a signature Twombly, mimicking a chalkboard with brutally charged marks, or a painter's palette smeared with blobs of dripping pigment, and these "blossom" paintings come as a surprise. Spaced out across enormous panels and painted in crimson on yellow or mint green, they're almost Pop in their buoyancy. But a thrum of Ab Ex angst is still there, and the floral designation feels a little suspect: The show's title is "A Scattering of Blossoms and Other Things," and the scrawled blossoms could just as easily be blooming wounds or giant puffs of smoke. Through Dec. 20. (Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717.)

Short List

GEORG BASELITZ: Gagosian 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Dec. 22. **BYRON DOBELL:** First Street Gallery, 526 W. 26th St. 646-336-8053. Through Dec. 22. **WADE GUYTON:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Dec. 15. **PIETER HUGO:** Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through Jan. 12. **ADRIAN PACI:** Blum, 526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055. Through Jan. 5. **CHARLES RAY:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Jan. 19. **MICHELLE SEGRE:** Eller, 615 W. 27th St. 212-206-6411. Through Jan. 8.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KATRINA DASCHNER
A photo depicting a pink crocheted penis affixed to white panties, line drawings of crotches, and related ephemera threaten to reduce Daschner's installation to twee gender-politics naughtiness. Happily, the show is saved by a decades-old performance: a video projected onto a large "painting" made of raw canvas augmented with breast-and-haunch-shaped panels, crocheted in beige. In the nineteen-forties Egyptian film clip, the dazzling Naima Akef plays both a flirtatious belly dancer and the female sailor she entrances. The implications of the doppelgängers' regard—both sapphic and narcissistic—trump any critical theory on the female gaze. Through Dec. 21. (Thrust Projects, 114 Bowery, at Grand St. 212-431-4802.)

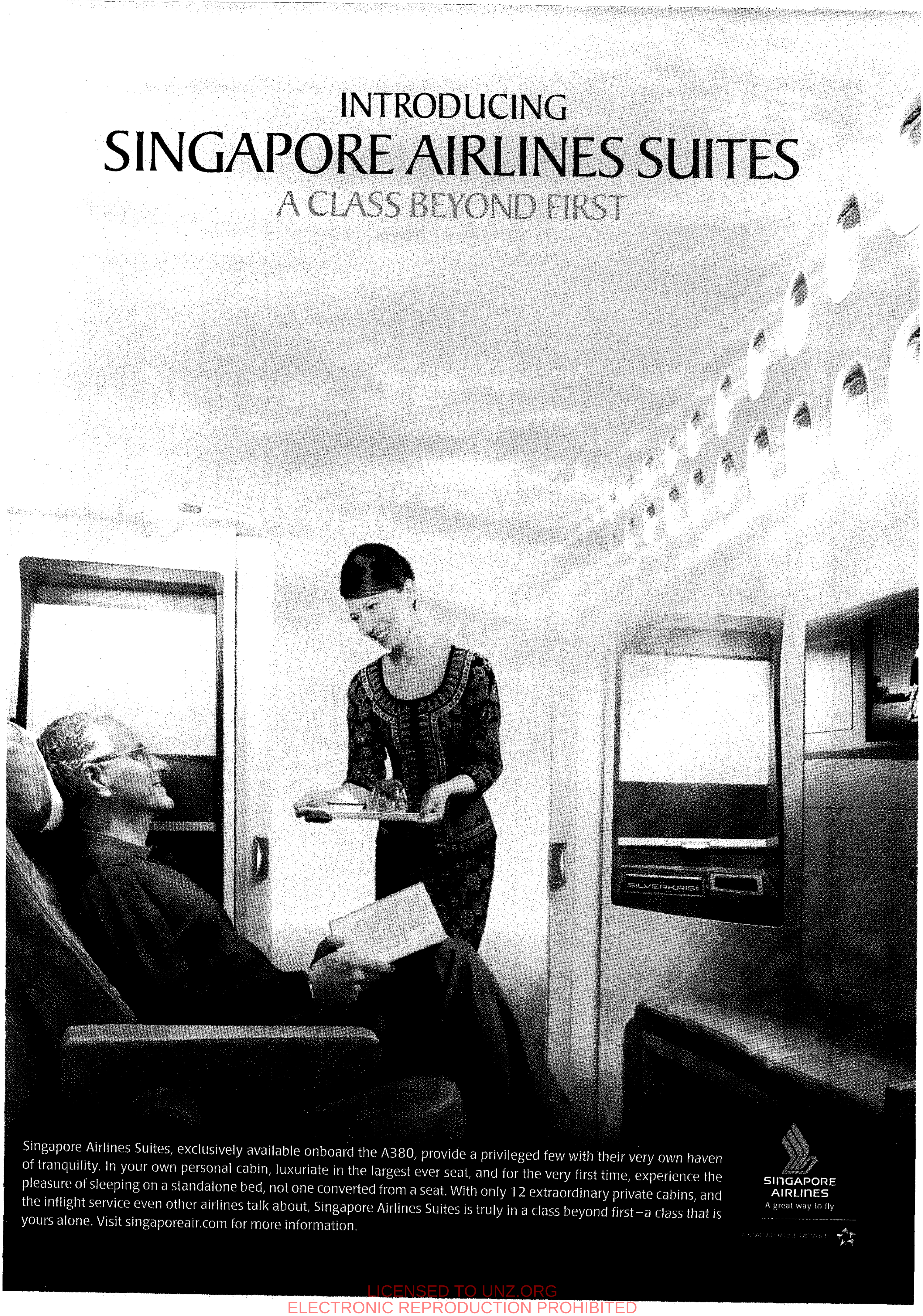
STEFAN HIRSIG
Hirsig's bright paintings and collages are the visual equivalent of pop songs that get stuck in your head—they may not be stirringly deep or original, but they're bouncy and well constructed. Metallic, iridescent, glossy, and matte paints are brushed, squeegeed, and dripped onto surfaces; thick blobs of paint support clusters of straight pins and string. Julie Mehretu comes to mind, but Hirsig's work is less systematic, more exuberant. Several pieces incorporate LPs and album sleeves; the best works do seem musical, though, like a summer radio hit, perhaps not meant for more than a season. Through Dec. 22. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 212-334-3455.)

KURT KAUPER
In his "Diva" series, the Los Angeles painter added lavish theatrical costumes to portraits of unfamous people; his new works flip the formula, stripping bare famous hockey players of the sixties and seventies. Bobby Orr is posed as if sliding to a halt on his skates against a monochrome background; Derek Sanderson wields a hockey stick in a wood-panelled locker room. It's a trick Kauper has used before (notably, in portraits of a jauntily nude Cary Grant), but here the beefcake effect is less ironic and humorous—it looks closer to hero worship. Through Dec. 15. (Deitch, 76 Grand St. 212-343-7300.)

ADRIAN PACI
The Albanian artist is ubiquitous these days, with work in "Senso Unico," at P.S. 1, and two solo shows (here and at Peter Blum in Chelsea). His themes are diaspora and absurd existential predicaments. In this single-channel video, men and women, with impassive expressions on their dark faces and brand-name logos on their worn shirts and caps, cross the tarmac to climb an airplane's roll-away stair; the camera pulls back to show them poised to step into empty space. At Blum, scenes from an Albanian wedding frescoed on freestanding, faux-old walls are less than compelling, but a black-humored video is haunting. In it, a young man in a suit (Paci himself) meets an old woman at a rural house. He lies down on a bier, and she commences a song of ritual weeping; when she finishes, the "corpse" rises to shake his mourner's hand. Through Dec. 22. (Smith-Stewart, 53 Stanton St. 212-477-2821.)

Short List

URS FISCHER: Brown, 620 Greenwich St., at Leroy St. 212-627-5258. Through Dec. 22. **PAUL McCARTHY:** Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977. Through Jan. 5. **DO HO SUH:** Lehmann Maupin, 201 Chrystie St. 212-254-0054. Through Feb. 2.

INTRODUCING
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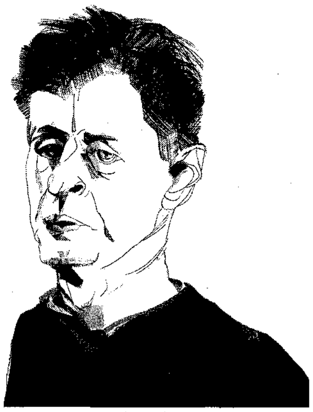
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
METAMORPHOSIS

When Russians call a dancer "artistic," they mean that he can act. Mikhail Baryshnikov's début as Albrecht in the Kirov Ballet's "Giselle," in 1972, was a sensation as much for his ideas about the character as for his brisés volés. In the West, too, he was always a dramatic dancer. (For some American critics, excessively so. Our ballet tradition is more stolid.) His first straight acting job was in Steven Berkoff's adaptation of Kafka's "Metamorphosis," which played on Broadway in 1989. ("It was not easy," he recalls. "On my belly for two hours, speaking English.") In 1979, he set up the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation, which has helped bring a number of ex-Soviet playwrights and directors here—Pyotr Fomenko, Lev Dodin, Rezo Gabriadze. In February, students from the Moscow Art Theatre will be at the B.D.F. This week, Baryshnikov himself will go back onstage, in "Beckett Shorts," a cluster of four one-act plays directed by JoAnne Akalaitis at New York Theatre Workshop. "I couldn't refuse," he says. "I would bite my elbows."



—Joan Acocella

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
George Balanchine's "Nutcracker," from 1954, with its magically growing tree and adorable angels, continues its run. Through Dec. 30. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Dec. 4-6 and Dec. 11 at 6, Dec. 7 at 8, Dec. 8 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 9 at 1 and 5. Through Feb. 24.)

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE
The annual five-week encampment at City Center continues with a première from the up-and-coming choreographer Camille A. Brown and a revival of Talley Beatty's "The Road of the Phoebe Snow," from 1959. The caricatures and jokes in Brown's "The Groove to Nobody's Business," set in the subway, are dull despite the Ray Charles recordings in the score, and seem even older than Beatty's dated but still powerful melodrama, set alongside train tracks. The peerless dancers do their best with these works; the repertory, as ever, includes plentiful repetitions of "Revelations." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Dec. 4 and Dec. 11 at 7, Dec. 5-7 at 8, Dec. 8 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 9 at 3 and 7:30. Through Dec. 31.)

"AU REVOIR PARAPLUIE"
A wistful Orpheus dream, by the French *nouveau cirque* master James Thiérrée. In his trippy, tragicomic universe, the absurd (invisible card tricks, a mailman/kangaroo) goes hand in hand with innocent displays of emotion (a heart beating in Thiérrée's knee, a blissful scene of a happy family watching movies in bed), feats of acrobacy and abstract dance, and striking stage images. The glue is a sophisticated score that ranges from Baroque opera to lieder and minimalist piano music. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 4-8 at 7:30 and Dec. 9 at 3. Through Dec. 16.)

BALLET HISPANICO
For its second week at the Joyce, the crowd-pleasing troupe offers a repertory program that reaches back. "Caravanserai," from 1980, is a late Talley Beatty carnival set to a Carlos Santana groove. William Whitener's "Tito on Timbales," from 1984, benefits from the live percussion provided by veterans of Tito Puente's band. "Club Havana," a historical tour from the conga to the cha-cha, choreographed by the former company member Pedro Ruiz in 2000, is a quintessential company piece. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Dec. 4-5 at 7:30, Dec. 6-7 at 8, Dec. 8 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 9 at 2 and 7:30.)

ROBBINSCHILDS
The heart of Sonya Robbins and Layla Childs's dance installation "C.L.U.E." (color location ultimate experience) is a video in which the duo, dressed in a series of matching monochromatic outfits, meander through American landscapes: an ocean shore, a desert highway, a junk yard. Against such ravishing backdrops, the minimal movement is frequently witty and even affecting. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Dec. 5-7 at 8:30 and Dec. 8 at 8:30 and 10:30.)

NEW SHANGHAI CIRCUS
The Chinese acrobat troupe continues its run. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Dec. 6-7 at 7, Dec. 8 at 2 and 7, and Dec. 9 at noon. Through Jan. 6.)

"YORKVILLE NUTCRACKER"
Dances Patrelle goes local in its version of "The Nutcracker," with a clever staging that translates the story from early-nineteenth-century Germany to New York in 1895. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. Dec. 6-7 at 7, Dec. 8 at 2 and 7, and Dec. 9 at noon and 5.)

"THE BARNARD PROJECT"
Dance Theatre Workshop showcases the work of choreographers who have completed residencies at Barnard College, where they try out new tricks with students. This year's participants are Keith A. Thompson, RoseAnne Spradlin (working with the laconic actor Ryutaro Mishima in a piece about pushing the boundaries of codes of conduct), Gerald Casel, and the stormy Amanda Loulaki. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Dec. 6-7 at 7:30 and Dec. 8 at 2 and 7:30.)

CHAMBER DANCE PROJECT
The group's artistic director, Diane Coburn Bruning, has commissioned a rich, turbulent string quartet from the young composer Giovanni Spinelli for her emotionally charged new ensemble piece, "Dark Parade." Other works performed include Victor Quijada's "I Said No But You Forgot" (a ballet/hip-hop fusion, set to Vivaldi) and Adam Hougland's "Stand Nine." (Ailey Citigroup Theatre, Ninth Ave. at 55th St. 212-868-4444. Dec. 6 at 7:30, Dec. 7 at 8, Dec. 8 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 9 at 7.)

REBECCA STENN COMPANY
Stenn's wonderful new duet "Periphery" traces the edge of the stage in a band of light. Resonant gestures suggest a relationship, now tentative, now tempestuous. The choreographer's poetic ensemble piece "Blue Print" also gets a reprise, minus its T. S. Eliot voice-overs. For both pieces, the bassist Jay Weissman and the cellist Dave Eggar play live, and in the latter, joined by violinist Rachel Golub, they're very much part of the dance. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. Dec. 6-8 at 8 and Dec. 9 at 3.)

NUGENT + MATTESON DANCE
Jennifer Nugent and Paul Matteson offer "Pieced Apart," an evening of four dance works. In the downtown choreographer Terry Creach's challenging duet "Saints Smother Swans," their shared history in David Dorfman's company comes through in their organic, fearless partnering. The two dancers are powerfully complementary: Nugent is introspective and reassuringly capable, Matteson childlike and mercurial. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Dec. 6-8 at 8:30.)

"WHITNEY LIVE"/MOVING THEATRE
The sometimes zany, sometimes obscure, and ultimately unclassifiable ensemble Moving Theatre takes over the Lower Gallery of the Whitney Museum for "Impermanent Collection." Performers behave in ways that make museum guards nervous, as video portraits, shot on-site by Brock Labrenz, convey each dancer's response to a work in the permanent collection. ICE joins in with music by Reich, Stockhausen, and Xenakis. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. 800-944-8639. Dec. 7 and Dec. 14 at 7.)

"DANCE FROM THE HEART"
Bill T. Jones hosts a benefit for Dancers Responding to AIDS. The all-star lineup includes representatives from American Ballet Theatre, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Martha Graham Dance Company, Keigwin + Company, Momix, and Shen Wei Dance Arts, plus the extraordinary tapper Jason Samuels Smith and cast members from "The Lion King." (Cedar Lake, 527 W. 26th St. 212-877-0770, ext. 268. Dec. 10 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
In such seminal works as **"Iphigénie en Tauride"** (based on the play by Euripides), Gluck gave voice to the emotions of his immortal characters through music of elegant simplicity and force. But the various elements of Stephen Wadsworth's new production work at cross-purposes, so it's best to just sit back and enjoy the vocal feast—the lyrical ardor of Paul Groves's Pylade, the heroic heft of Plácido Domingo's Oreste, and the tonal sunset glow of Susan Graham's Iphigénie. Louis Langrée and the orchestra sustain a fractious symposium on matters of tempo and articulation, but come together by the end. (Dec. 5 and Dec. 11 at 8 and Dec. 8 at 1:30.) ♦ Bellini's **"Norma,"** with Maria Guleghina, Dolora Zajick, and Franco Farina; Maurizio Benini conducts. (Dec. 7 at 8. This is the final performance.) ♦ Gounod's **"Roméo et Juliette,"** a delightfully gauzy entertainment inspired by Shakespeare that bowed at the beginning of the season, returns for the holidays with the magnetic Anna Netrebko and the up-and-coming Joseph Kaiser in the title roles;

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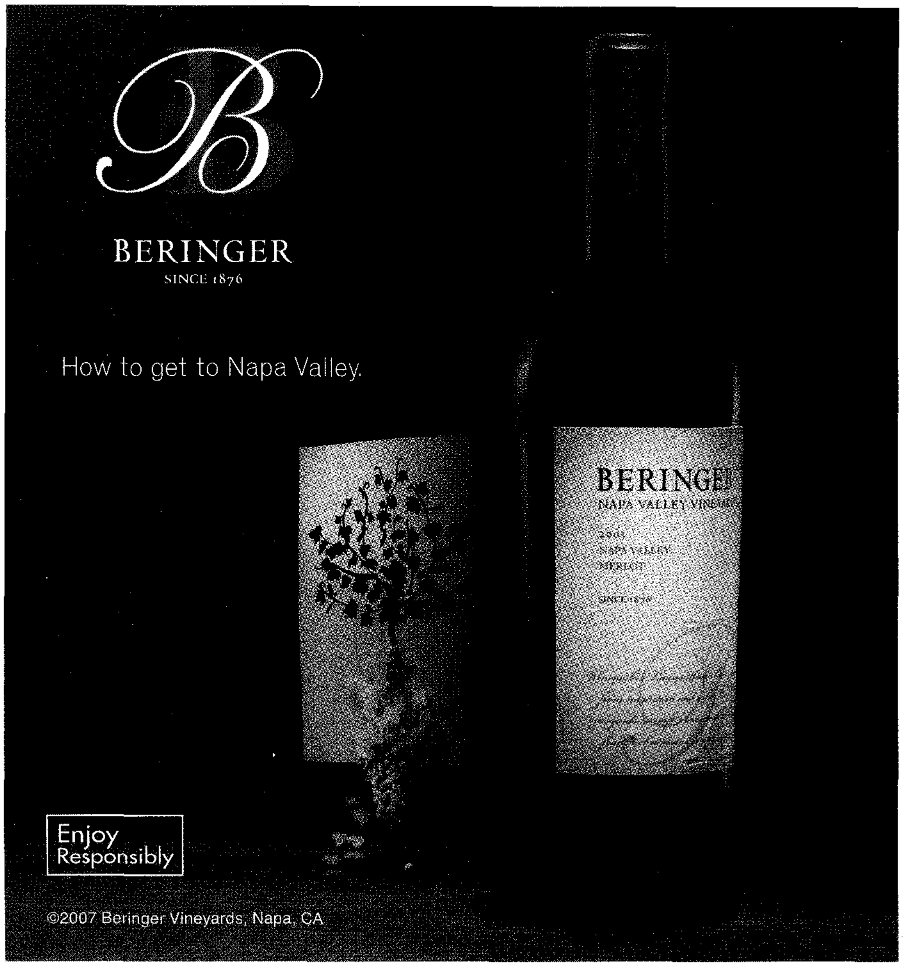

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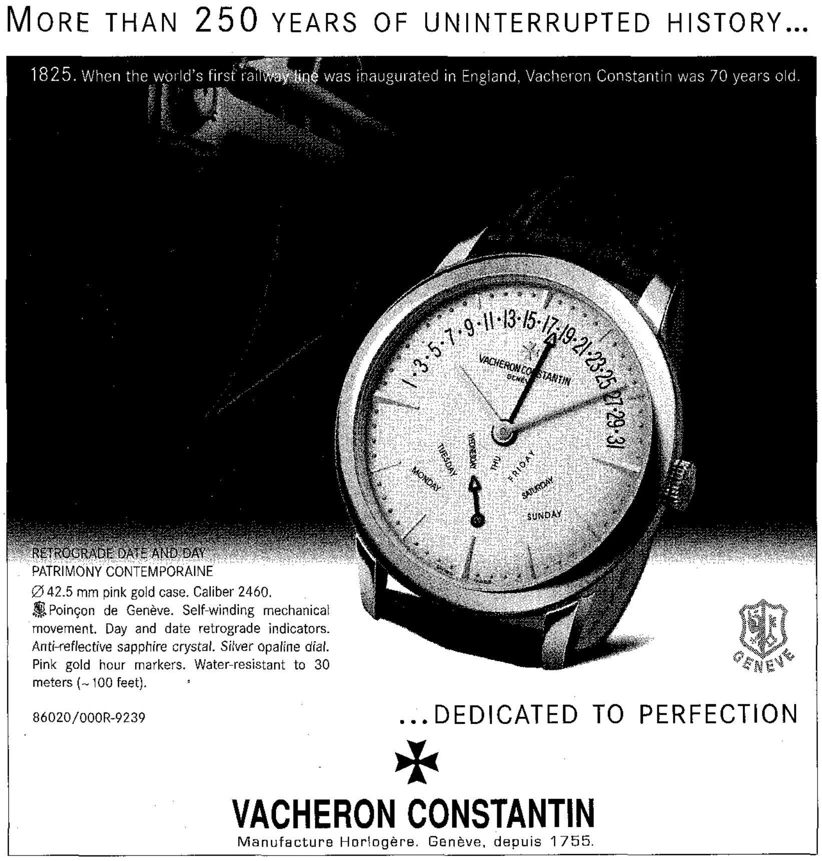

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Plácido Domingo conducts. (Dec. 8 at 8.) ♦ First seen at the Met in 2002, “**War and Peace**”—Prokofiev’s magnum opus, a sprawling adaptation of the Tolstoy novel—was one of the great triumphs of the Joseph Volpe regime, not least because it featured the Met début of Anna Netrebko. Peter Gelb revives Andrei Konchalovsky’s production (which features sets by George Tsypin) for a run that brings back some original cast members (Ekaterina Semenchuk, Vassily Gerello, and Samuel Ramey) along with two prominent newcomers (Irina Mataeva and Vasili Ladyuk); the indomitable Valery Gergiev is in the pit. (Dec. 10 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

BAM: TAN DUN'S "THE GATE"
In this multimedia work of “orchestral theatre,” the flamboyant Chinese composer combines the stories of three tragic, suicidal heroines from world literature: Juliet (sung by the soprano Nancy Allen Lundy), Yu Ji (performed by the Peking Opera actress Song Yang), and Koharu (a Japanese character, brought to life by the Chinese puppeteer Hua Hua Zhang). Assisting in the New York première are the Brooklyn Philharmonic and its conductor, Michael Christie (who also plays a dramatic role). (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 5 and Dec. 7-8 at 7:30.)

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA THEATRE: "GRIFFELKIN"
Lukas Foss’s ingratiating three-act opera (an expansion of a one-act children’s opera premièred on NBC in 1955), about a mischievous little devil who visits New York, features the young countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo in the title role; Steven Osgood conducts. (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. 917-493-4428. Dec. 5 and Dec. 7 at 7:30 and Dec. 9 at 2:30.)

"EINSTEIN ON THE BEACH"
Carnegie Hall presents a single performance of excerpts from Philip Glass’s iconic 1976 opera, the first time in fifteen years that the composer and the Philip Glass Ensemble have come together for the cause. Lucinda Childs and Melvin Van Peebles take the speaking roles, with the gifted young violinist Timothy Fain impersonating the violin-playing physicist. (212-247-7800. Dec. 6 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE: "WHAT NEXT?"
After producing a stream of masterworks in many other genres, Elliott Carter finally turned to opera in his tenth decade. Susan Narucki leads the cast; Christopher Alden directs; Axiom, Juilliard’s expert new-music band, is in the pit, conducted by Jeffrey Milarsky. The one-act opera will be preceded by performances of several of the composer’s chamber works. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Dec. 7-8 at 8, Dec. 9 at 2, and Dec. 11 at 7:30.)

HOLIDAY MUSIC

THE TALLIS SCHOLARS
The British early-music choir, renowned for its purity of sound and elegant interpretations, is a favorite on the Miller Theatre schedule. The group returns for a Christmas program featuring works by such masters as Palestrina (“Missa Nigra Sum”), Crecquillon, and des Prez that celebrate the Virgin Mary. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 212-854-7799. Dec. 5 at 8.)

THE KING'S SINGERS
Holiday music is a natural fit for this ebullient group, which brings its exquisite vocalism to an exceptionally interesting program of works by Pärt, Palestrina (“Missa Papae Marcelli”), Praetorius, Reger, and Górecki at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-721-6500. Dec. 8 at 8.)

THE WESTERN WIND: "HOLIDAY LIGHT!"
In its annual program, the chamber choir offers a range of holiday folk music, medieval works, and Hasidic and Sephardic songs at All Souls Unitarian Church. (Lexington Ave. at 80th St. 212-873-2848. Dec. 8 at 8.)

ST. THOMAS CHURCH: "MESSIAH"
The church's renowned Anglican choir of men and boys always offers an excellent account of Handel's beloved oratorio that connects with the best traditions of English music-making. John Scott, the group's distinguished choirmaster, conducts two performances accompanied by the Baroque group Concert Royal. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Dec. 11 and Dec. 13 at 7:30. For tickets, see www.saintthomaschurch.org.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Philippe Jordan, the young Swiss conductor who has been making waves with his Mozart performances at the Met, crosses the plaza to make his Philharmonic début, leading works by Dvořák, Beethoven (the Third Piano Concerto, with Pierre-Laurent Aimard), and Smetana (selections from the epic cycle "Má Vlast"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Dec. 6 at 7:30, Dec. 7 at 11 A.M., and Dec. 8 at 8.)

THE KNIGHTS
The vibrant Brooklyn-based chamber orchestra (featuring such young virtuosos as the violinist Colin Jacobsen and the pianist Steven Beck) finally makes it to Carnegie Hall, performing works by Haydn, Bartók (the Divertimento), Lutoslawski, and Philippe Bigar (a première), along with a whirl of Gypsy songs. (Weill Recital Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 7 at 7.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The conductorless chamber orchestra has been commissioning composers to write companion pieces to Bach's six Brandenburg Concertos. Christopher Theofanidis's "Muse" is the latest, a pendant to the Concerto No. 3, which will be premièred on a program that also includes two works by Schumann: the Piano Concerto (with the estimable Christian Zacharias) and the seldom heard semi-symphony "Overture, Scherzo, and Finale." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 8 at 8.)

RECITALS

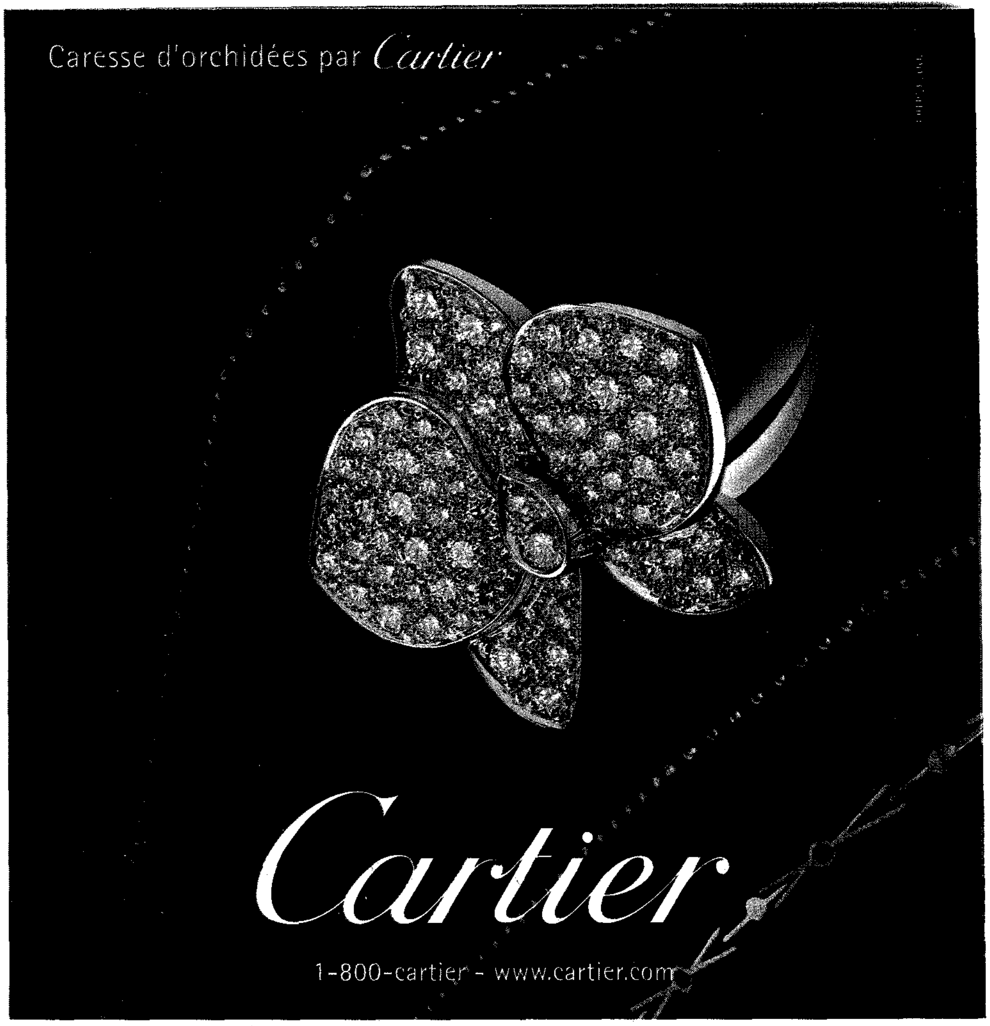
JOEL KROSNICK AND GILBERT KALISH
Two decorated veterans of the new-music wars look back at a half-century's worth of music for cello and piano by Ralph Shapey, Richard Wernick, Ernst Bacon (renowned for his songs), and Robert Stern (a première). (Paul Hall, Juilliard School. Dec. 6 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

JERUSALEM STRING QUARTET
The energetic young group comes to the 92nd Street Y to offer works by Beethoven, Tzvi Avni, and Brahms (the Clarinet Quintet, with the excellent Alexander Fiterstein). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Dec. 6 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "BAROQUE COLLECTION"
The Society's master musicians, not regulars on the early-music scene, bring their talents to engaging works by Corelli (the "Christmas Concerto"), Purcell ("When I Am Laid in Earth," with the mezzo-soprano Monica Groop), Telemann, and Vivaldi. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-875-5788. Dec. 7 at 7:30 and Dec. 9 at 5.)

BROOKLYN CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY
Chamber music flourishes in the City of Churches. The well-connected group invites some prominent Manhattanites (including the cellist Carter Brey) to collaborate with the Society's director, the violinist Carmit Zori, in string quartets by Haydn, Brahms, and Janáček (No. 1, "The Kreutzer Sonata"). (First Unitarian Church, Monroe Pl. at Pierrepont St. 718-858-0718. Dec. 7 at 8.)

WORKS & PROCESS AT THE GUGGENHEIM: "DADA, JAZZ, AND THE AVANT-GARDE"
In a program created by Sarah Rothenberg, the enterprising pianist is joined by the violinist Joel Smirnoff (of the Juilliard String Quartet) and the soprano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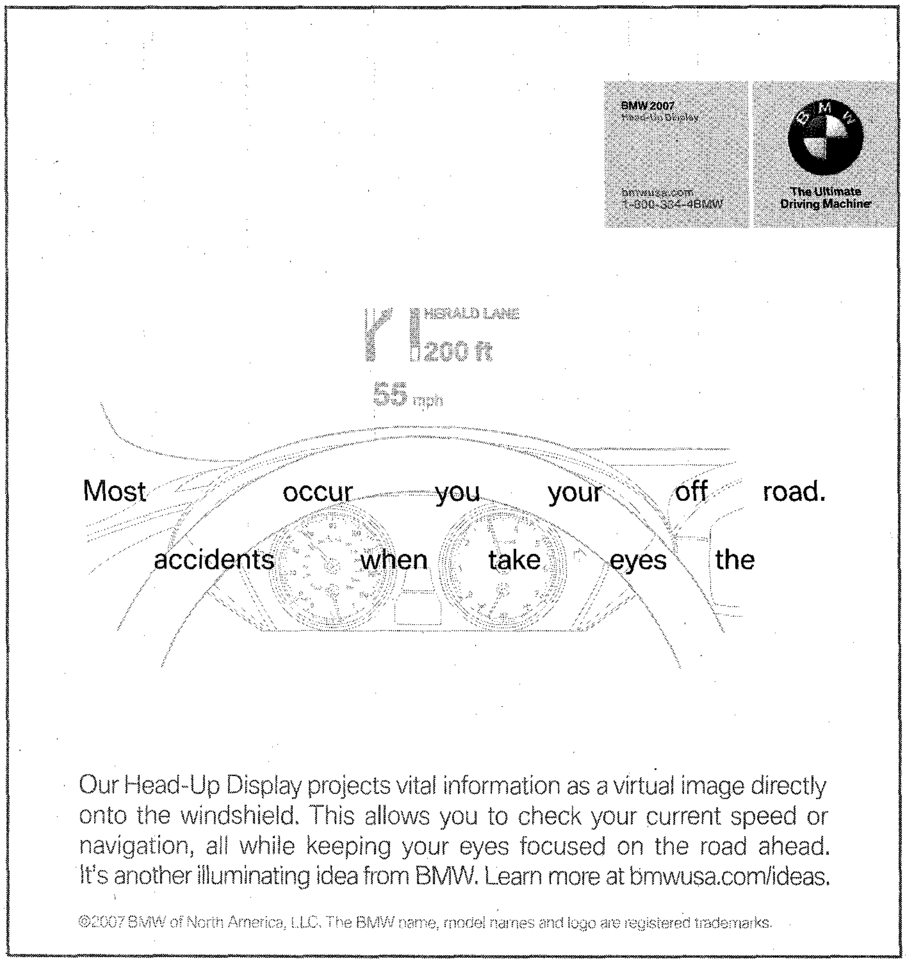
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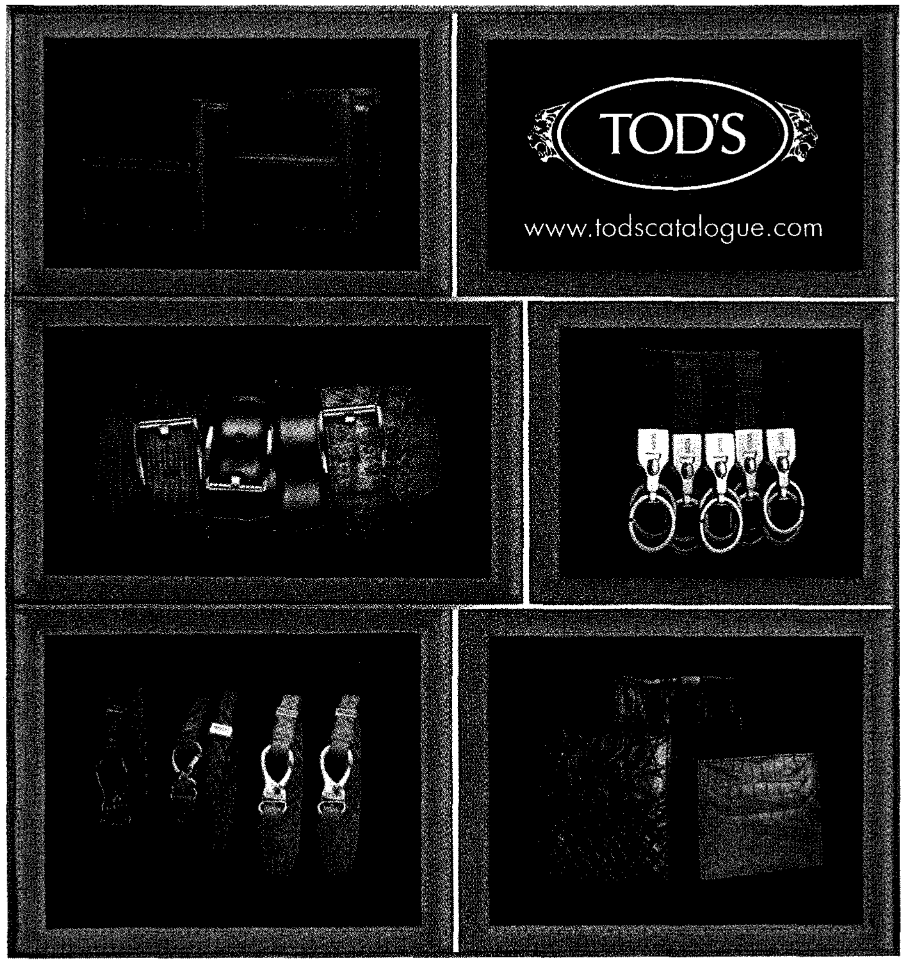

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Lucy Shelton for a string of between-the-wars works by Wolpe, Weill, Bartók, Dessau, and Webern. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Dec. 9-10 at 7:30.)

SPECULUM MUSICAE
The distinguished contemporary-music group takes on a world première by the Danish genius Poul Rudders, known for such brilliant and blisteringly intense works as the opera "The Handmaid's Tale." Music by Magnus Lindberg (the Clarinet Quintet) and Kaija Saariaho will also be performed in a concert at—where else?—Scandinavia House. (Park Ave. at 38th St. 212-879-9779. Dec. 10 at 6:30.)

MOVIES OPENING

ATONEMENT
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 7. (In wide release.)

THE BAND'S VISIT
In this comedy, directed by Eran Kolirin, an Egyptian military band gets lost in Israel. In English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Opening Dec. 7. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BILLY THE KID
A coming-of-age drama about a teen-age boy in rural Maine, directed by Jennifer Venditti. Opening Dec. 5. (IFC Center.)

THE GOLDEN COMPASS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Dec. 7. (In wide release.)

GRACE IS GONE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Dec. 7. (In wide release.)

JUNO
A satire about a sixteen-year-old girl who gets pregnant and looks for a couple to adopt her baby, starring Ellen Page and Michael Cera. Directed by Jason Reitman. Opening Dec. 5. (In wide release.)

MAN IN THE CHAIR
A comedy about an adolescent movie buff (Michael Angarano) who recruits a retired technician (Christopher Plummer) to help him make a film. Directed by Michael Schroeder. Opening Dec. 7. (Empire 25.)

REVOLVER
Guy Ritchie directed this thriller, about a criminal (Jason Statham) out for revenge on the casino owner (Ray Liotta) who got him sent to jail. Opening Dec. 7. (Empire 25 and Village Theatre VII.)

'TIS AUTUMN: THE SEARCH FOR JACKIE PARIS
A documentary, directed by Raymond De Felitta, about a jazz singer, who, after starting out singing with Charlie Parker and Charles Mingus, sank into obscurity. Opening Dec. 7. (Cinema Village.)

THE VIOLIN
Francisco Vargas directed this drama, about three generations of Mexican farmers who support a revolt in the hope of keeping their land. In Spanish. Opening Dec. 5. (Film Forum.)

THE WALKER
In this political drama from Paul Schrader, a gay man (Woody Harrelson) who squires Washington, D.C., wives finds one of them (Kristin Scott Thomas) ensnared in a murder scandal. Opening Dec. 7. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

THE ABYSS
This lively featurette, from 1910, may take the prize as the original running-away-with-the-circus melodrama. A surprisingly modern and unaffected vamp, Asta Nielsen stars as a free-spirited woman who gets picked up on a Copenhagen streetcar and joins her bourgeois admirer at a summer resort. But when a travelling show passes through town, she runs away with an artiste in a cowboy hat and follows him—and her passion—down the abyss to her degradation. This was the first film by the director, Urban Gad (Nielsen's husband), and he seems amazed by the

power of the cinema to make such familiar things as trolley cars and gardens, railroads and alleyways, all seem wondrously new again. The action culminates in Nielsen's stage routine with her theatrical heartthrob, an apache dance of a still stunning erotic audacity, which Gad, also apparently stunned, filmed in a single, hypnotic three-minute take. Silent.—*Richard Brody* (Scandinavia House; Dec. 5 and Dec. 8.)

THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY

In 1995, Jean-Dominique Bauby, the editor of French *Elle*, suffered, at the age of forty-three, a massive stroke that left him able to move nothing but his left eye. The little book that Bauby composed by blinking while a secretary ran through the alphabet serves as the basis for this astounding movie, which was directed by Julian Schnabel and written by Ronald Harwood. At first, we see only what Bauby (Mathieu Amalric) sees: a blur of faces, which turn out to be the doctors and nurses at the hospital, who float into view in fearsome closeup, like deep-sea monsters. Consciousness arrives, and we experience the discomforts of Bauby's treatment. But then, by degrees, the movie opens up to the great world: Bauby's life and past, his fantasies and dreams. The associations are wild and free, yet nothing feels arbitrary or showy (one thinks of the visionary episodes in silent films rather than of Fellini). We need this free-flowing beauty; we deserve it; the movie, in the end, is an overwhelming sensual experience. With Emmanuelle Seigner, Olatz Lopez Garmendia, and Marie-Josée Croze. Magnificent cinematography by Janusz Kaminski. In French.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/3/07.) (In wide release.)

THE DOCKS OF NEW YORK

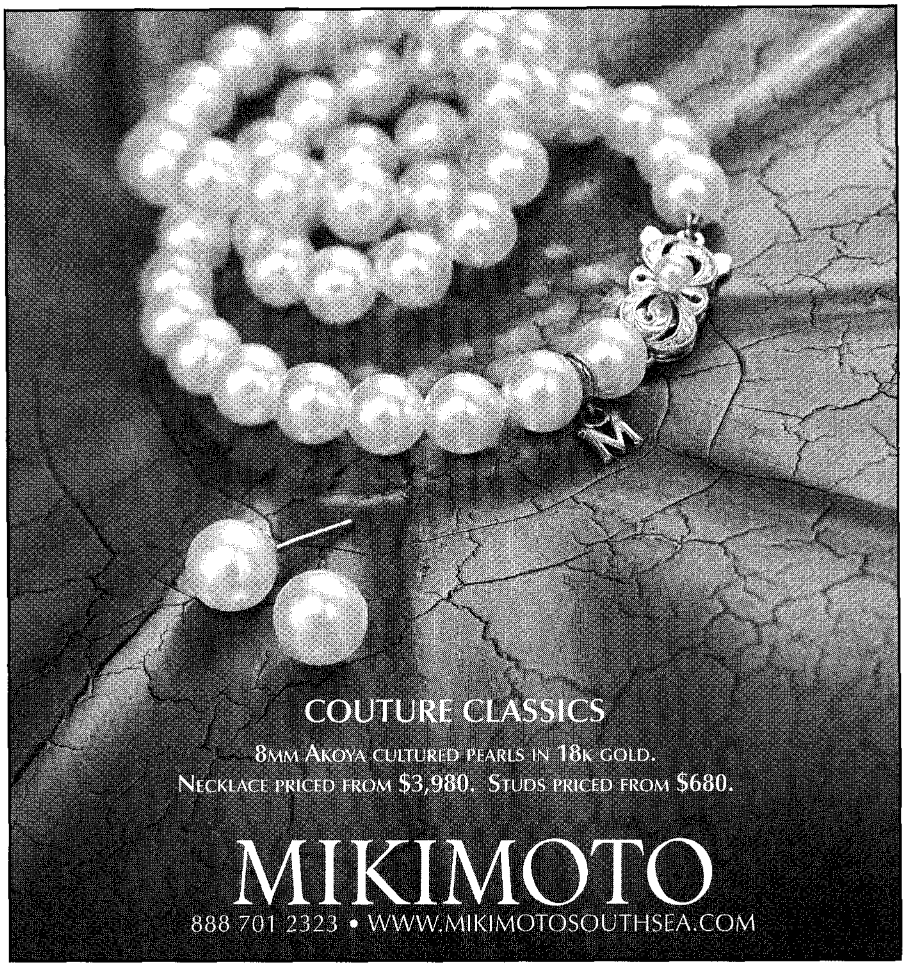
Good, unclean fun about a brawny coal stoker (George Bancroft) who saves a woman (Betty Compson) from suicide, marries her without a license (in a saloon), then finds himself torn between his new love and his old wandering ways. The director, Josef von Sternberg, knew how to use visual zing to fuel a seventy-four-minute movie, and if you've seen later collaborations (such as "Morocco") between him and this picture's screenwriter, Jules Furthman, you'll recognize the roots of their specialty here: characters who behave better than they think they can. Compson is terrific as a heroine who knows the time of day and wishes she didn't; her eyes are like sundials registering the come-ons of the men around her. Silent. Released in 1928.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Dec. 9.)

ENCHANTED

Disney fights back. After years of seeing its animated features outclassed by the competition—not least from Pixar, its own subsidiary—the company has realized that its strength lies in plundering its back catalogue and making sport with the spoils. Hence Kevin Lima's new film, which starts in a cartoon kingdom (an unabashed homage to early Disney, exploding with anthropomorphism) and suddenly spirits its main characters into the real world—or, at any rate, into a New York where people sing on cue, and where a divorce lawyer (Patrick Dempsey) can discover his inner warmth. So, not that real. But the conceit is smartly wrought, so much so that the attempts at comic relief (from a C.G.I. chipmunk and a henchman played by Timothy Spall) seem not just lumpen but superfluous. Happily, the leads carry the day: James Marsden as a prince of grinning vanity, Susan Sarandon as the wicked stepmother (although the climax turns her into something else, again unnecessarily), and, above all, Amy Adams, who, in the role of a would-be princess, finds true momentum, not just sappiness, in the farce of innocence. With songs by Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz.—*Anthony Lane* (In wide release.)

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

An earnest and unsatisfying adaptation of the first book in Philip Pullman's best-selling young-adult fantasy trilogy, "His Dark Materials." The adventure takes place in a land where people's souls manifest themselves as animals and the sinister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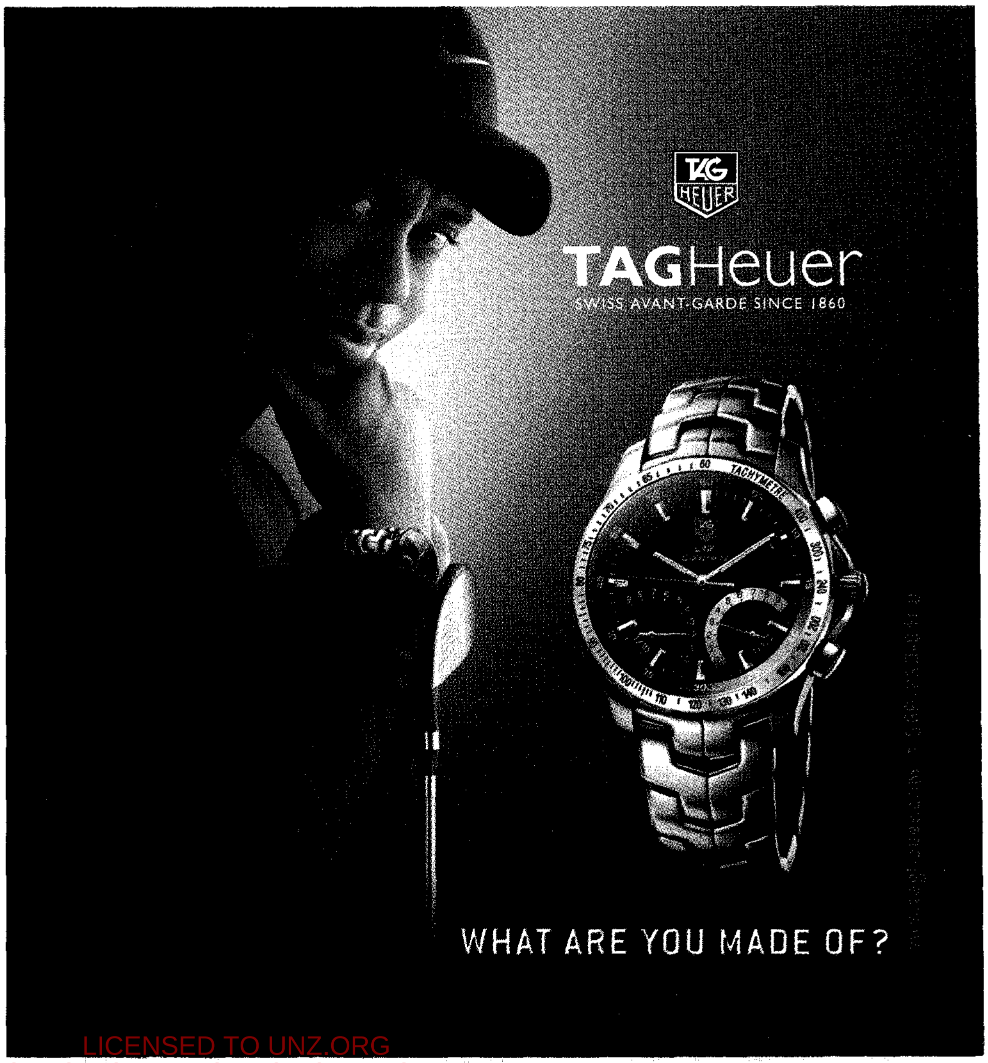

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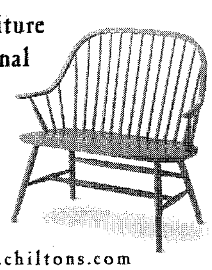

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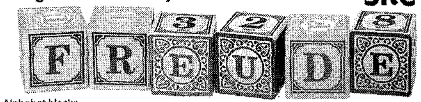

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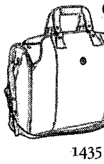

government of the Magisterium wants to rule the world. The story involves a young orphan girl (Dakota Blue Richards) who, with the aid of a magic compass, sets out to find two friends who have been kidnapped, for nefarious reasons, by the Magisterium. At the same time, she is befriended by a glamorous world traveller (Nicole Kidman), who promises to help her on her quest but has her own agenda. The movie, directed by Chris Weitz, is stuffed with subplots and characters (talking animals, witches, and water gypsies) who all have a story to tell, and the narrative gets so busy that the plot gets lost. With its soaring Roman structures, vehicles out of Jules Verne, and Dickensian Cockney dialogue, Weitz gets the look and the feel right, but the magic ends there. And the unresolved ending is a huge problem, particularly if the audience hasn't been told that the film is basically a setup for things to come.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

GRACE IS GONE

Stanley Phillips (John Cusack) is a middle-aged store manager with spectacles and a touch of flab. He used to be in the military, but his eyesight grew too weak; his wife, however, is still a soldier, serving in Iraq. When news comes that she has been killed, he cannot bring himself to break it to their daughters, Heidi (Shélan O'Keefe) and Dawn (Gracie Bednarczyk), choosing instead to take them out of school for a visit to the Enchanted Gardens, in Florida. Much of the movie unfolds as a kind of anesthetized road trip, with ordinary life—and the fact of death—barely intruding upon their joyless adventure. The writer and director, James C. Strouse, spends the whole film working up to Stanley's moment of revelation and then blows it, smothering the scene in music that blots out the words. Cusack, moving like a sleepwalker, is cast strongly against type, but that type (think of his motormouth in "High Fidelity") was always appealing, and his fans will miss his wit; thankfully, the movie, which looks drab and drained, is rescued by the wonderful O'Keefe, whose grave demeanor seems ominously mature—it is as though she were already primed to assume the mother's role. With Alessandro Nivola as the hero's antiwar brother.—*A.L.* (In wide release.)

I'M NOT THERE

On the principle that the range and mutability of Bob Dylan's music defies classification, and that his own character has been an amalgam of selves, this new Todd Haynes movie assigns six separate actors—Marcus Carl Franklin, Ben Whishaw, Heath Ledger, Christian Bale, Richard Gere, and Cate Blanchett—to play variations, as it were, on the theme of being Dylan. Of the six, only the first and last make an enduring impact—Franklin with his smile and brio, Blanchett with the audacity of her transformation into a curly-haired, mumbling male sage. The other performers are smothered by the central conceit, which may well exasperate aficionados while baffling the unconverted; the real Dylan is never spoken of, and his songs have to fight for space amid the mythmaking and speculation. In particular, the section with Gere, who moseys around a doomed Western town in the role of Billy the Kid, feels richly redundant to the project. Haynes's fans, at least, will be gratified to find his command of light and color undiminished. With Bruce Greenwood in fine form as a quizzical journalist.—*A.L.* (11/26/07) (In wide release.)

MARGOT AT THE WEDDING

There are many ways of frustrating and boring an audience, but setting up a bunch of characters who are so inept that they can't hit a croquet ball, or run through the woods without tripping, or chop down a tree without its landing on a wedding tent may be the most infuriating way of all. Noah Baumbach's new movie is about a family that can't do anything right. Margot (Nicole Kidman), a novelist with a disconcerting habit of sticking a verbal knife into people, shows up at the house of her unhappy sister, Pauline (Jennifer Jason Leigh), who is about to marry an out-of-work rocker (Jack Black). Misery, confusion, and much stumbling about ensue. Baumbach has modelled the movie on Bergman's lacerating isolated-island pictures, but, unlike Bergman, he hasn't worked out the struggle between speaking and withholding. People simply blurt out scathing remarks or behave badly, so there's little power in the various revelations and betray-

TABLES FOR TWO
KYO YA

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94 E. 7th St. (212-982-4140)—Kyo Ya specializes in *kaiseki*, a form of cuisine said to have originated in sixteenth-century Kyoto, initially as an accompaniment to the tea ceremony. To eat the full, ten-course meal at Kyo Ya, you have to book a day or two in advance, since esoteric ingredients are shipped from Japan. (The regular menu, however, can be ordered anytime, and abounds with similar dishes.)

The ambience is calm, the clientele largely Japanese, and the interior full of gorgeous details. A wall of rippling wood swoops near the bar; men's and women's toilets are marked by a fern and a flower, respectively. Plates, from thinnest glazed porcelain to chunky, asymmetric, almost volcanic stoneware, become an art form; you're unlikely ever to see the same plate or sake cup twice. Despite the precision, there's no anxious effort to impress, and you get the feeling that the staff would prepare food this elaborate even if they were just eating it themselves.

And it is elaborate. Pressed sushi is covered with a thin speckled film of kombu, edible kelp: it looks as if lacquer had been applied over the rice. A simple apéritif of *shochu*, garnished with tiny morsels of pear cut in leaf and star shapes, tastes the way you imagine dew might. Monkfish liver is presented in a vase of pebbles, abalone on a cushion of salt; you get to sear small rectangles of beef on a terrifyingly hot shiny stone. Dried mullet roe (which you grill over an open flame) looks like carrot, has the consistency of bean curd, and tastes like anchovy, only more so. Coupled with a rectangular tablet of daikon radish, it looks uncannily like a mah-jongg tile. *Aigamo* duck comes with a cake of *mochi*—a kind of rice polenta with a texture between dough and string cheese but stickier than either. (In Japan, people occasionally suffocate while eating it.) The *kaiseki* meal culminates in a dish that might seem plain: steamed rice. But the silvery Koshihikari rice from Uonuma is highly prized, and here it is served with condiments including twice-grilled salmon as light and brittle as a cracker and as salty and desiccated as jerky. If you can't finish, you might be given a *kaiseki* doggy bag: rice balls encased in nori seaweed, and wrapped for the journey home in a bamboo leaf. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner. Dishes $9-$32; *kaiseki* from $120.)

—*Leo Carey*

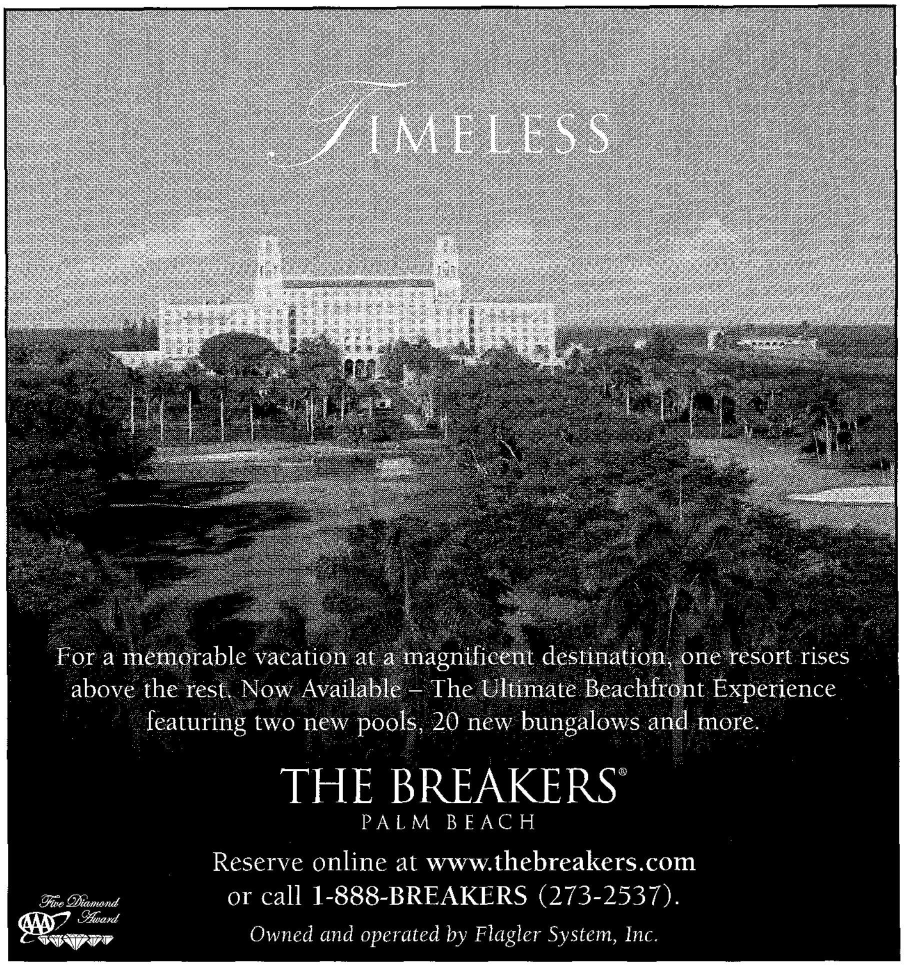
als. The leafless, unbeautiful island is monochromatic. Even nature seems like a flop.—*D.D.* (11/19/07) (In wide release.)

THE MIST
It takes nerve, and a certain style, for the director of "The Shawshank Redemption" to make a horror film in which almost nothing is redeemable, but that is what Frank Darabont has done. A small town in Maine is invaded by thick mist, under cover of which lurk misshapen creatures—the outcome, we vaguely learn, of wayward military experiments. As if determined to stock up on groceries, they lay siege to a supermarket, where a crowd of locals has found refuge. These include some reassuringly familiar types, such as the heroic pragmatist (Thomas Jane), the consoling schoolteacher (Laurie Holden), the finger-pointing nutcase (Marcia Gay Harden), and the skeptic (Andre Braugher) who refuses to believe in giant, writhing flesh-eaters right up to the moment at which he meets them socially. The result, adapted from a story by Stephen King, is well paced, and blood is shed in careful moderation, but do not be fooled by the anguish of the climax: this is the true, B-movie mixture of shocks and silliness, and is all the better for it.—*A.L.* (11/26/07) (In wide release.)

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN
The new movie by the Coen brothers is adapted from Cormac McCarthy's novel of the same name. Javier Bardem, his menace half-masked by a comical haircut, plays a calm, unstoppable psychopath on the trail of a stolen two million dollars. (His presence is both frightening and entertaining, if never wholly credible.) Various unfortunates cross his path and suffer the consequences, but his principal target is Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin), a passing hunter who took the money. Following them both is Sheriff Bell (Tommy Lee Jones), who seems in no particular hurry, and whose ruminations on crimes past and present committed in this desolate part of Texas are spoken in a gravelly voice-over. The movie, photographed by Roger Deakins, is almost stately in its ominous control, drawing us into the minutiae of mayhem and revenge. What other filmmakers would devote an extended scene to the stashing of booty in a ventilation shaft? The result is oddly unemotional, as if a vicious game were being played by solemn rules, with barely a flicker of interest in the characters' moral plight. Only Kelly Macdonald, in her beautifully judged (and accented) performance as Moss's wife, begins to restore the balance. With Woody Harrelson.—*A.L.* (11/12/07) (In wide release.)

LE PLAISIR
Though Max Ophüls's 1952 costume adaptation of three stories by Maupassant matches the originals in frank sensuality and comic irony, the director reshapes the material with his distinctive blend of visual genius and bitter, worldly wisdom. The first two episodes—concerning a legendary seducer, now elderly, who dons a mask to gavotte with the young belles at a dance hall, and the ladies of a small-town brothel who send the local men into a tizzy when they close up shop to attend the madam's niece's first Communion—lift the veil of effervescent ribaldry to reveal the agonies of unsatisfied desire. In the dance hall, Ophüls's gliding, gyrating camera captures the lusty, pounding steps of a quadrille as erotic as a night-club grind; in church, he slyly suggests the nuanced faith of unrepentant sinners. The third story, about a bright young artist whose relationship with his live-in model goes sour, finds Ophüls pursuing much bigger game—nothing less than the nature of love, the source of art, even the meaning of life. This philosophical tale with a whiplash ending presses the director's elegant style to the breaking point, climaxing with a harrowing, vertiginous shot that rises to the nightmarish sublimity of the moment. As a bonus, one of the greatest of all last lines: "Happiness is not cheerful." In French.—*R.B.* (BAM; Dec. 9.)

REDACTED
Brian De Palma's movie is based on actual events—the rape and murder, near Baghdad, in March, 2006, of a fourteen-year-old girl, and the murder of her family as well, by five mem-



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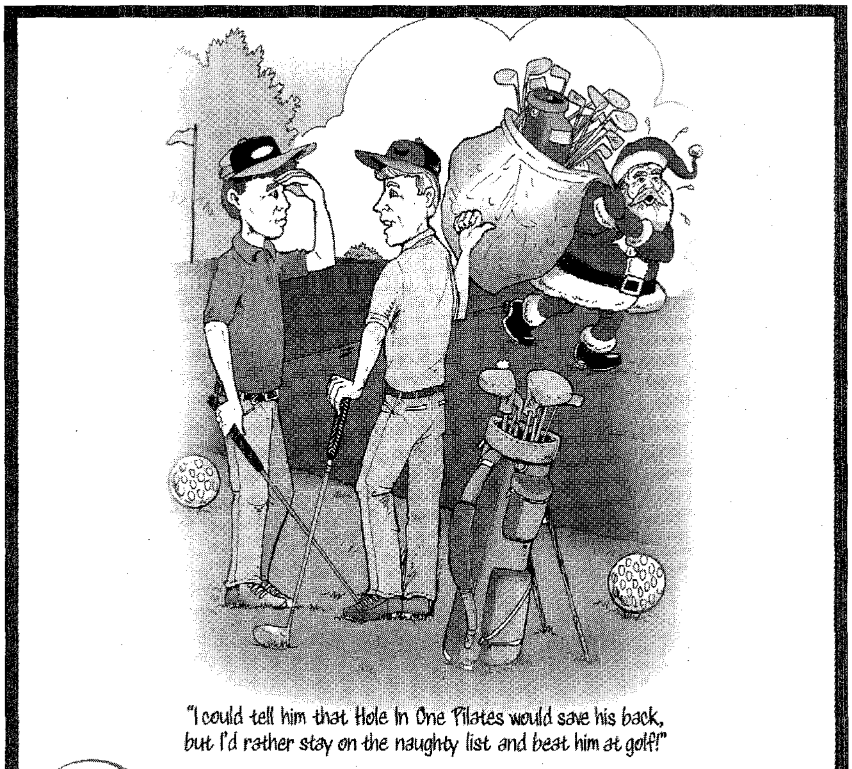

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bers of an American Army platoon. De Palma has made a fiction out of the events, creating characters and situations whose precise nature he inferred from soldiers' accounts, blogs, and news reports. And he has assembled his fiction from a variety of fictionalized documentary forms: a video diary made by one of the soldiers, a terrorist Web site showing the murder of the platoon's master sergeant, a portentous French documentary complete with stern Baroque music, and so on. Some of the men are in terrible shape—scared and trigger-happy, and quick to launch the ritual accusations of faggotry or pussydom at anyone in the platoon who doesn't want to do something violent. Watching these guys through one lens or another is fascinating but hellish. One longs for a unifying point of view, but De Palma's idea is that such an experience can no longer simply be told but must be pieced together from clumsy, off-center representations, all of which are guilty in some way. The spectrum runs from impotent observation (the French documentary) to complicity (the soldier's video diary) to actual violence (the terrorist Web site). In all, the movie is a grimly mischievous emblem of our media-haunted world.—*D.D.* (11/19/07) (In wide release.)

THE SAVAGES
A vital, honest, and engaging movie about two fortyish siblings who have never grown up. Philip Seymour Hoffman plays a saturnine literature professor who specializes in the most acidulous of twentieth-century artists, Bertolt Brecht, and Laura Linney is his kid sister, an unproduced playwright who gets by working temp jobs, stealing from office supply rooms, and hustling for grants. Unresolved in everything that matters, brother and sister, to their chagrin, find themselves in charge of their nasty and unreachable father (Philip Bosco), who has never given them any love. The movie, however, is less interested in their relation to him than in their cranky elbowing of each other. Written and directed by Tamara Jenkins, "The Savages" asks whether two people who have never been prized can possibly bring themselves to value anyone else or even themselves. The answer is soberly inspiring.—*D.D.* (12/3/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

AWAKE: In wide release. **BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD:** In wide release. **THE DARJEELING LIMITED:** In wide release. **MICHAEL CLAYTON:** In wide release. **STARTING OUT IN THE EVENING:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—The films of Jerzy Skolimowski. Dec. 5 at 7: "Le Départ" (1967; in French). ♦ Dec. 5 at 9:15: "Innocent Sorcerers" (1960, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish). ♦ Dec. 6-7 and Dec. 10-11 at 7 and 9 and Dec. 8-9 at 5, 7, and 9: "Deep End" (1970). ♦ Special screenings. Dec. 7-12 at 7:30: "The Holy Modal Rounders . . . Bound to Lose" (2006, Sam Wainwright Douglas and Paul Lovelace). ♦ Dec. 8-9 at 4:30: "Zabriskie Point" (1970, Michelangelo Antonioni).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Special event. Dec. 5 at 7: "Sorcerer" (1977, William Friedkin), followed by a Q. & A. and book signing with the critic Kent Jones. ♦ Through Dec. 18: The films of Max Ophüls. Dec. 6 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "La Signora di Tutti" (1934; in Italian). ♦ Dec. 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Lola Montès" (1955; in French). ♦ Dec. 8 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "La Ronde" (1950; in French). ♦ Dec. 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Le Plaisir" (†). ♦ Dec. 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Liebelei" (1933; in German). ♦ Dec. 11 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Tender Enemy" (1936; in French).

"The Golden Compass," a fantasy directed by Chris Weitz, opens Dec. 7.

KIRSTEN ULVE

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through Dec. 13: The films of Ousmane Sembene. Dec. 5-6 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "Black Girl" (1966; in French) and "Borom Sarret" (1964; in French). ♦ Dec. 7-8 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Mandabi" (1968; in French and Wolof). ♦ Dec. 9-10 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "Guelwaar" (1993; in French and Wolof). ♦ Dec. 11 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Faat-Kiné" (2000; in French and Wolof).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Fashion Icons." Dec. 11 at 12:30 and 9: "Les Demoiselles de Rochefort" (1967, Jacques Demy; in French). ♦ Dec. 11 at 4 and 7: "The Acrobat" (1976, Jean-Daniel Pollet; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Dec. 7-20 (call for showtimes): "Eraserhead" (1977, David Lynch). ♦ Dec. 7-9 at noon: "Zazie dans le Métro" (1960, Louis Malle; in French). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Dec. 7-9: "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" (2001, John Cameron Mitchell), with live performances and a costume contest.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Dec. 5-7 at 1:30: Short films by James Herbert, including "Silk" (1977). ♦ "Treasures III: Social Issues in American Film." All films are silent. Dec. 5 at 6: "The Soul of Youth" (1920, William Desmond Taylor). ♦ Dec. 5 at 8 and Dec. 8 at 4:30: "Redskin" (1929, Victor Schertzinger). ♦ Dec. 6 at 8:30 and Dec. 8 at 2:30: Short-film program, including "Bud's Recruit" (1918, King Vidor). ♦ Dec. 7 at 5:15: "The Godless Girl" (1928, Cecil B. De Mille). ♦ "Asian Cinevisions." Dec. 6 at 6 and Dec. 7 at 7: "Before We Fall in Love Again" (2006, James Lee; in Mandarin). ♦ "Collaborations in the Collection." Dec. 6 at 6: "The Smiling Lieutenant" (1931, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Dec. 6 at 8: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Lubitsch). ♦ Dec. 7 at 6: "Happy Together" (1997, Wong Kar-Wai; in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish). ♦ Dec. 7 at 8:30: "Fallen Angels" (1995, Wong; in Cantonese). ♦ Dec. 8 at 2 and Dec. 10 at 8: "Aguirre, the Wrath of God" (1972, Werner Herzog; in German). ♦ Dec. 8 at 4: "Woyzeck" (1979, Herzog; in German). ♦ Dec. 8 at 6: "Fitzcarraldo" (1982, Herzog; in German) ♦ Dec. 9 at 2: "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Dec. 9 at 4: "The Docks of New York" (†). ♦ Dec. 9 at 4:30: "The Scarlet Empress" (1934, Sternberg). ♦ Dec. 9 at 5:45: "Jet Pilot" (1957, Sternberg). ♦ "An Evening with Mario Rizzi." Dec. 10 at 7: "Murat and Ismail" (2005, Rizzi; in Turkish).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Magic, Music, and Early Movies." Dec. 8-9 at 2: "The Invention of Hugo Cabret," a presentation by Brian Selznick, featuring films by Georges Méliès and live music by Sxip Shirey. ♦ Dec. 8 at 4: "The Kid" (1921, Charlie Chaplin; silent) and "Sherlock Jr." (1924, Buster Keaton; silent). ♦ Dec. 8 at 7: Short films by Thomas Edison, with live music by the New York Miniaturist Ensemble. ♦ Dec. 9 at 4: "The Little Match Girl" (1928, Jean Renoir; silent), "Le Million" (1931, René Clair; in French), and "A Clock Store" (1931, Wilfred Jackson). ♦ Dec. 9 at 7: "Zero for Conduct" (1933, Jean Vigo; in French), "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French), and "Fugitive L(i)ght" (2005, Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. Dec. 5-12 at 9: "Undoing" (2006, Chris Chan Lee).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Dec. 7 at 7: "The Milky Way" (1969, Luis Buñuel; in French), introduced by Ramon Prats.

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave., at 38th St. (212-847-9779)—Through Dec. 15: "A Celebration of Danish Cinema: Nordisk Film at 100." Dec. 5 at 6:30 and Dec. 8 at 3: "The Abyss" (†) and "Towards the Light" (1919, Holger Madsen; silent).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Dec. 8-9: "Donnie Darko" (2001, Richard Kelly).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Spanish Cinema Now." All films are in Spanish. Dec. 7 at 2:15 and 6:45 and Dec. 9 at 12:45: "Under the Stars" (2007, Félix Viscarret). ♦ Dec. 7 at 4:30 and Dec. 8 at 9: "53 Winter Days" (2006, Judith Colell). ♦ Dec. 7 at 9:15, Dec. 9 at 5, and Dec. 11 at 3:30: "Theresa, the Body of Christ" (2007, Ray Loriga). ♦ Dec. 8 at 1:30: "The Cuenca Crime" (1979, Pilar Miró). ♦ Dec. 8 at 3:45: "Contestant" (2007, Rodrigo Cortés). ♦ Dec. 8 at 6:30, Dec. 9 at 9:30, and Dec. 11 at 1:30: "Yo" (2007, Rafa Cortés). ♦ Dec. 9 at 2:50: "The War on Film," Program 1. ♦ Dec. 9 at 7: "Solitary Fragments" (2007, Jaime Rosales).

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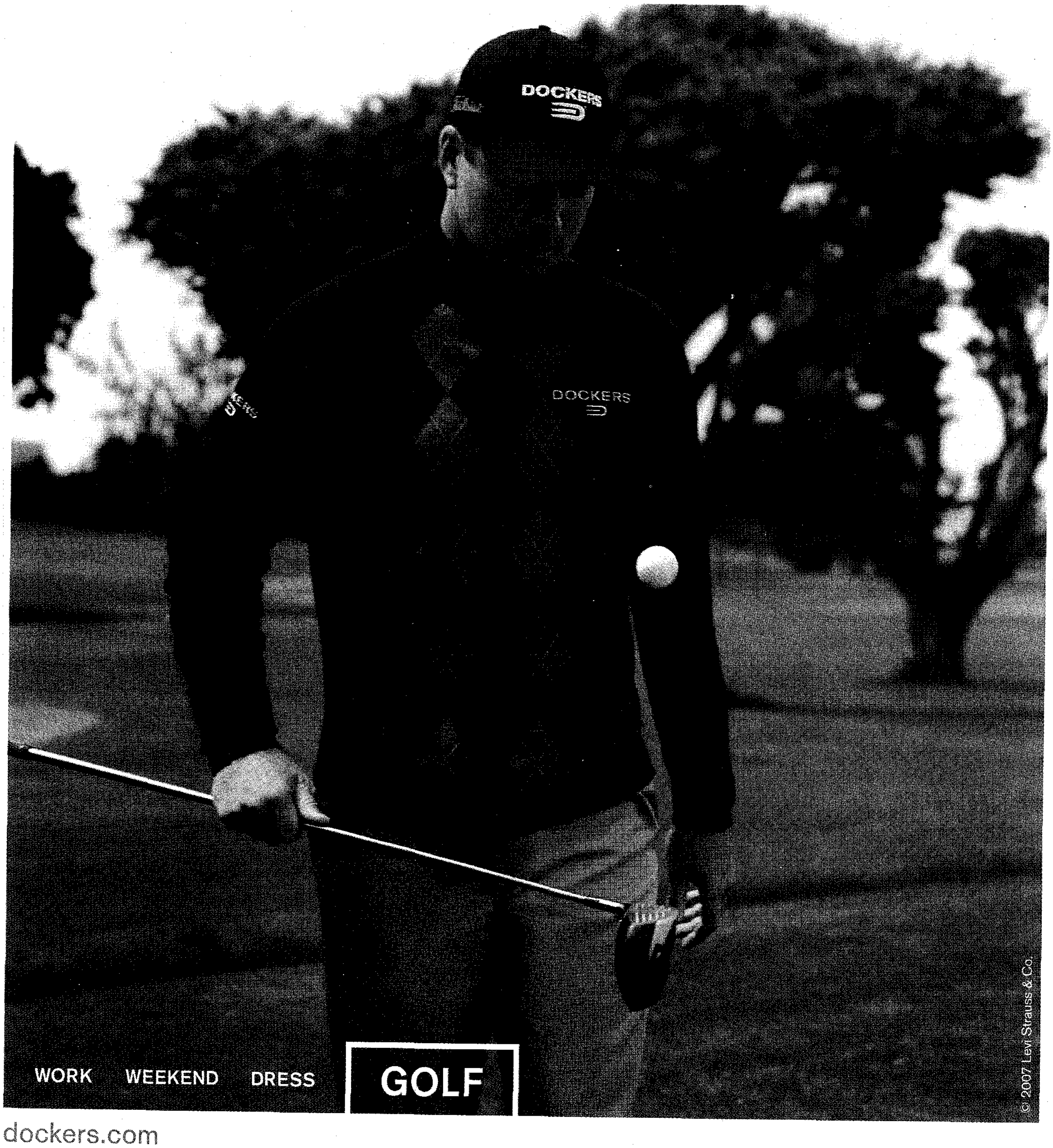
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READINGS AND TALKS

NATIONAL ARTS CLUB
The novelist Alexander Chee, the journalist and publisher Joshua Clark, and the short-story writer Scott Snyder read from their work. (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary. Dec. 5 at 7.)

"SECRET SCIENCE CLUB"
The monthly lecture series in the basement of the Union Hall bar returns with the paleontologist Michael Novacek, who will discuss evolution, biodiversity, and mass extinction. (702 Union St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-638-4400. Dec. 5 at 8.)

BARNES & NOBLE
The cartoonist, illustrator, and humorist Bob Eckstein discusses his new book, "The History of the Snowman." (Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary. Dec. 6 at 7.)

"OUR EMILY DICKINSON"
The library and literary center Poets House presents a look at the poet, with Susan Howe, the author of "My Emily Dickinson," the biographer Brenda Wineapple, the artist Jen Bervin, and the critic Eliot Weinberger. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. For more information, call 212-431-7920. Dec. 6 at 7.)

"FOR THE TIME BEING: A CHRISTMAS ORATORIO"
The Affinity Company Theatre and the Poetry Society of America are presenting staged readings of W. H. Auden's elaborate poem, which he wrote during the Second World War. The cast includes Maria Tucci, and the production is directed by Michael Cumpsty. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101. Dec. 9 at 7:30. Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 10 at 7:30.)

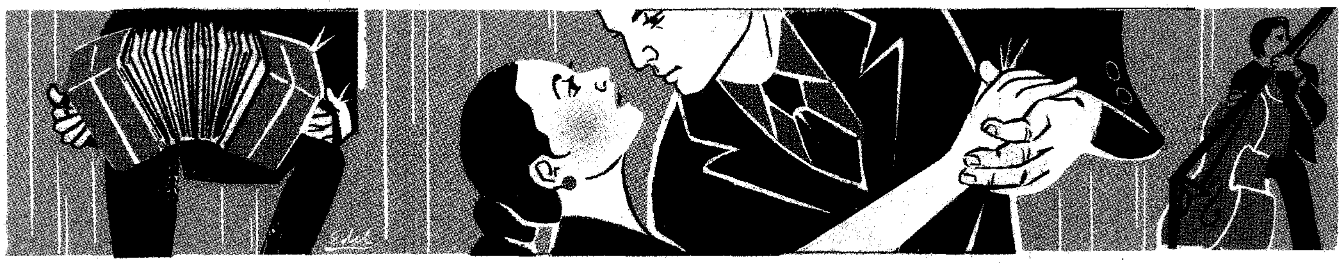
"THERE WILL BE BLOOD"
The Museum of the Moving Image decamps for the night to Manhattan for a screening of Paul Thomas Anderson's forthcoming film, which is a loose adaptation of Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel, "Oil." The lead actor, Daniel Day-Lewis, will talk with Anderson following the film. Peter Bart, the editor-in-chief of *Variety*, is the moderator. (Clearview's Chelsea West Cinemas, 333 W. 23rd St. For more information, call 718-784-4520. Dec. 11 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
Charles Dickens's original manuscript for "A Christmas Carol," complete with his additions, deletions, and revisions, is on display at the Morgan Library. On Dec. 7, from 6:30 to 8:30, the library complements that seasonal display with a concert of holiday music by singers from the Mannes College of Music (they will return the following Friday, too). On Dec. 9, from 2 to 5, the library presents a series of family activities, including a marionette show, cotillion dancing, and a paper-doll-making workshop. Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, and other costumed characters from Dickens's classic tale will also be on hand. (Madison Ave. at 36th St. 212-685-0008.)

THE SALZBURG MARIONETTES
Of all the Metropolitan Museum's delightful holiday offerings, this is the family favorite. The company offers two productions, with elaborate sets and two-foot-high puppets. Dec. 7 at 7, Dec. 8 at 3, and Dec. 9 at noon and 3: "The Sound of Music," accompanied by a recording of the Rodgers and Hammerstein score featuring Jonathan Groff (of "Spring Awakening") and Christiane Noll. ♦ Dec. 8 at 7: The company returns to its traditions with a performance of Mozart's "Magic Flute." (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
The sober elegance of the art of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and the Near East sets the tone this week. **Christie's** sale (Dec. 6) features an exceptionally beautiful Roman silver *skyphos* (a wine cup with two handles) from the beginning of the Common Era, with images from the Trojan War cycle depicted in vivid relief. That afternoon, the house holds a sale of ancient jewelry in which a pair of gold earrings from the Hellenistic period, showing Nike with outspread wings, is especially pleasing; more contemporary jewelry creations go on the block on Dec. 11. On Dec. 8, the house holds a sale not only of wines but also of distilled spirits—the first since the passage of a recent law in New York permitting such auctions, which had been illegal since Prohibition days. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** sale of antiquities (Dec. 5) gives pride of place to the "Guennol Lioness," a masterfully carved five-thousand-year-old Mesopotamian limestone figure of a standing lion, just under four inches tall—a potent talisman, and one of very few such pieces still in private hands. At an auction of books, manuscripts, and Americana (Dec. 11), both Orson Welles's 1941 Best Screenplay Academy Award for "Citizen Kane" and a working copy of the actual script will go to the highest bidder; another sale that afternoon comprises just one lot—George Washington's Society of the Cincinnati medal, created in 1783 and later presented by his family to the Marquis de Lafayette, whose descendants have kept it to this day. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)



Estampas Porteñas's "Tango Fire," at the Joyce.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

ON THE HORIZON

ART
REMOTE CONTROL
Dec. 12-Feb. 17

In 1973, Richard Serra made "Television Delivers People," a scathing video critique of broadcast media that paired a Muzak soundtrack with a scrolling list of strategies used by commercial television to manipulate viewers into accepting a corporate agenda. The Whitney Museum borrows the title—and the spirit—of the piece for an exhibition of single-channel tapes from the seventies to the present. (800-944-8639.)

MOVIES
LABOR PAINS
Dec. 13-Dec. 30

The 1949 film "Bitter Rice," one of the treasures of Italian neorealism, stars Silvana Mangano as a farm laborer who becomes mixed up with big-city criminals. MOMA presents it along with a batch of other films by its director, Giuseppe De Santis. (212-708-9480.)

DANCE
IT TAKES TWO
Dec. 18-Jan. 6

Estampas Porteñas, based in Buenos Aires, was founded in 1996 by the Argentine ballerina Carolina Soler. At the Joyce, the troupe of five couples performs "Tango Fire," complete with a live quartet, the aptly named Quatrotango. (212-242-0800.)

NIGHT LIFE
PRINE TIME
Jan. 5

The wry country-folk vocalist John Prine has been especially prolific over the past few years, releasing a superb solo album, "Fair & Square," as well as a record with the bluegrass legend Mac Wiseman. Prine brings almost forty years of his sardonic, sometimes surreal songs to Carnegie Hall. (212-247-7800.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LOOKING BACK
Jan. 25 and Jan. 26

Miller Theatre's seesaw schedule, which finds new music and early music always alternating with one another, will shift to one side of the spectrum in January, when it will offer back-to-back concerts of music by Bach (with the period-instrument orchestra Les Boréades de Montréal) and from pre-Reformation England (with the New York-based Vox Vocal Ensemble). (212-854-7799.)

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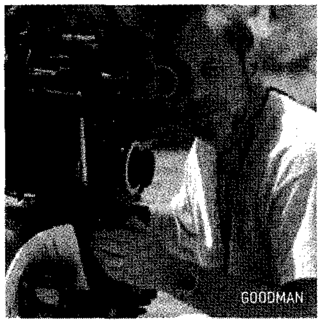
BEHIND THE SCENES

FOCUSING ON “HEROES”’ PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTORS

With twenty-two episodes filmed during “Heroes”’ Emmy®-nominated freshman year and thirty more airing through spring, 2008, the hit series requires more than one cinematographer to track the huge cast of characters and tell their interwoven stories. Currently, directors of photography Nate Goodman and Charlie Lieberman alternate shooting episodes. This interview with the lensmen is the fourth in a five-part series with the talented crew behind NBC’s most-watched new drama.


GOODMAN

What’s your approach to filming* “Heroes”*?

LIEBERMAN: Being somewhat visually obsessed, I see the visuals as a character. The writers write for the characters, and the photography director introduces a visual style that practically becomes another character.

Tell me about how you both work together.

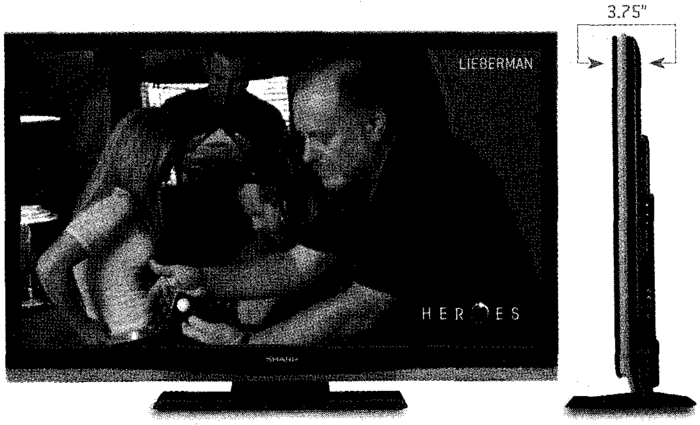
LIEBERMAN: Nate’s a great collaborator. We alternate shooting episodes, each of which can take ten to twelve days to shoot the thirty to forty-five scenes typically shot.

GOODMAN: Each of us preps with different directors. We talk to each other about the looks for different environments and try to make each location have a slightly different signature, and then agree on the basic parameters from a color perspective, but after that you’re trying to facilitate the director’s vision.

Can a viewer identify certain characters by the camerawork?

G: While I try to give the characters in each of the stories somewhat of a signature look, it doesn’t stay the same from episode to episode; it has more to do with the emotion of the scene.

L: Every scene has a tone. It can be suspenseful, romantic, comical. There are different ways to shoot each of those tones, different lenses and different camera moves to use.



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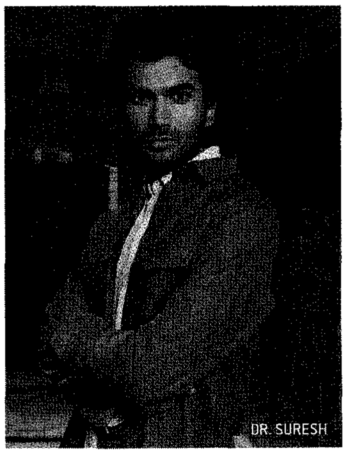
G: For example, with the Hiro character, when he is in a Japanese environment, we appropriate a look of Japanese cinema, using very formal composition, often at right angles.

Is it a challenge to shoot HDTV closeups?

G: The HD format is sharper and has more resolution. It enables viewers to detect the nuances that we’re putting in there from a lighting and set-design perspective. We have to pay even more attention to the lighting of actors; makeup, skin quality, and eye shadows are more pronounced in HD than in standard television. All of these things work together to produce higher-quality images.


DR. SURESH

Does it make a difference to you that* “Heroes” *is broadcast in HDTV?

G: NBC has shot most of its prime-time shows in the 16x9 format for a number of years, which makes it different from other networks. We take advantage of that on “Heroes” and place scenes in a wider scope, since the show is large and as feature-like as possible on TV. Basically we shoot the show as if it were going to be on a big screen.

L: It’s so much more exciting to have the wider-frame screen width. When you see “Heroes” in high definition, you’re getting the whole thing. It’s made TV more attractive both to shoot and to watch.

Anything you’d like to add about the visuals on* “Heroes”*?

L: The writers give us incredible material to visualize; they have great ideas for the drama. It’s a joy to come up with ideas on our side to get them onto film in ways that work together to tell the story.

What do you watch* “Heroes” *on at home?

L: A thirty-two-inch HDTV. If I can get on my soapbox, it’s to say that all TVs should be HDTV. Simply put, the 16x9 format provides a superior visual experience. It’s the more truthful delivery of information and closest approximation to the purest video version of the show.

The next volume of “Heroes” premieres Monday, January 14th, 9–10 P.M. ET on NBC.

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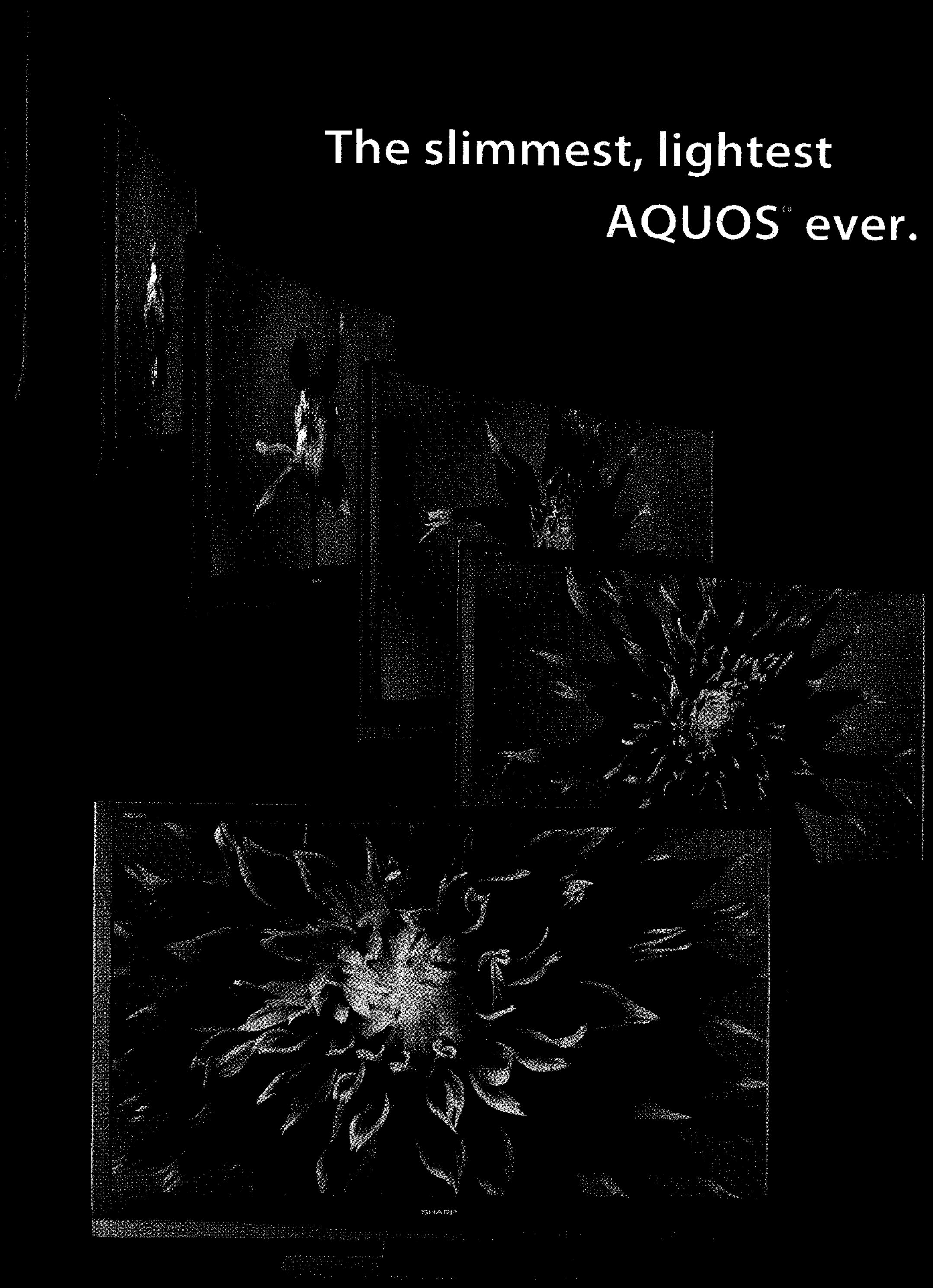

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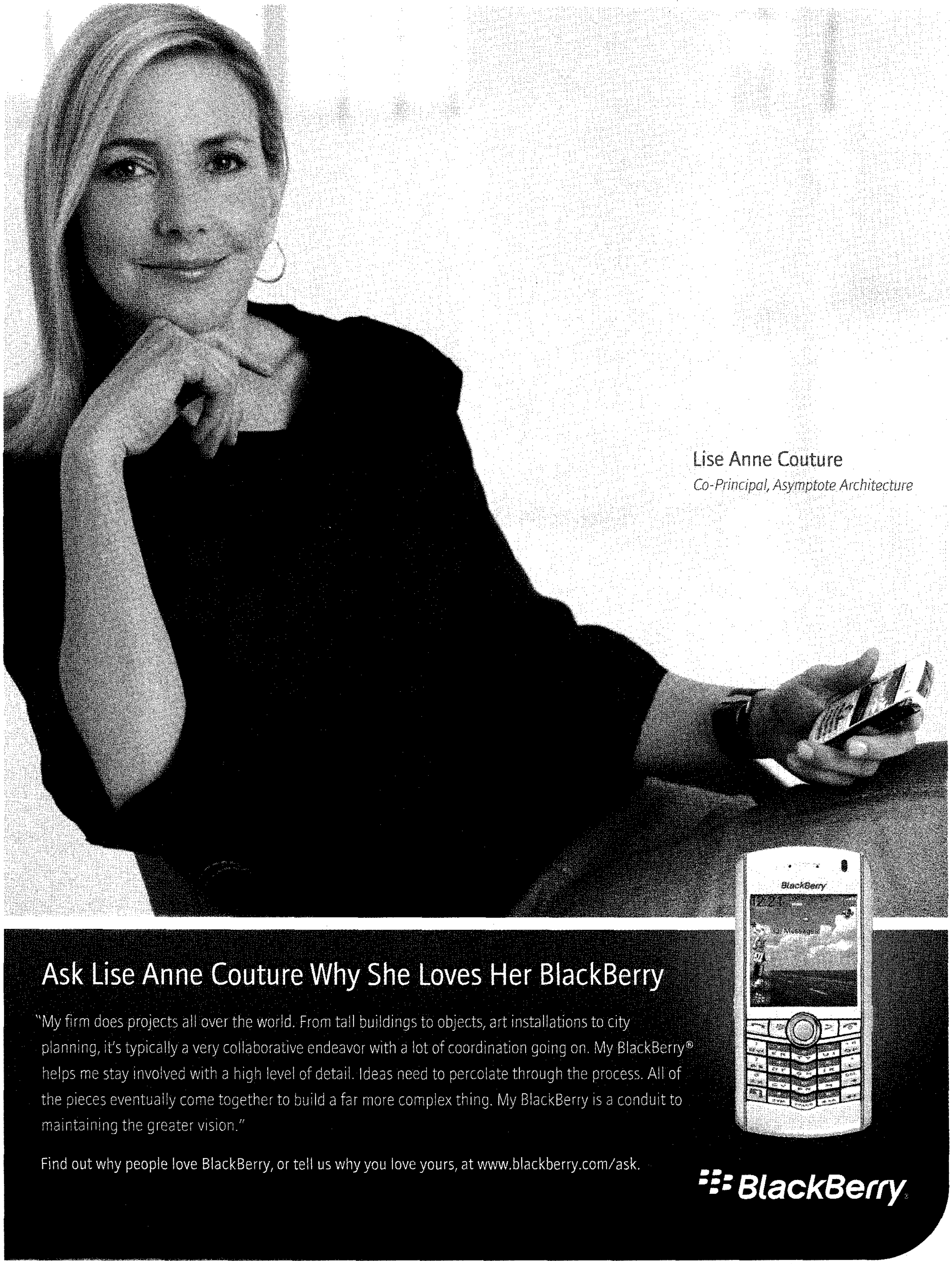

Lise Anne Couture
Co-Principal, Asymptote Architecture

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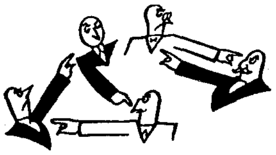
THE NEW YORKER

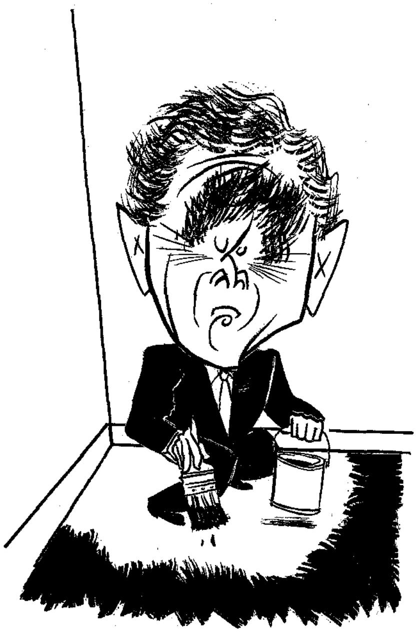
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
FOLLOW THE LEADERS



Regime change was one of the stated goals of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Unlike cleansing the place of weapons of mass destruction and breaking up the alleged Baghdad-Al Qaeda nexus, it was a reality-based goal; and, unlike the other two (which were as unattainable and unnecessary as ridding the moon of green cheese), it was actually accomplished. Saddam Hussein's regime has indeed been changed—though what it has been changed into, of course, is not quite what was intended.

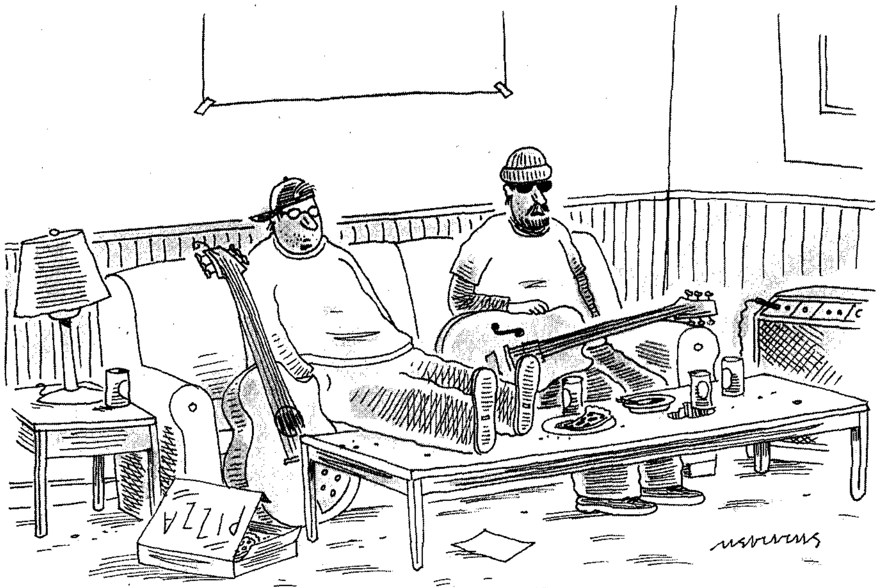
And regime change, it turns out, is infectious—a militarily transmittable disease, almost invariably fatal, so far, to any political party or head of government so careless of hygiene as to have had intimate relations with the Bush Administration's Mesopotamian misadventure. The contagion set in less than a year into the war, when, three days after the Madrid terrorist bombings of March 11, 2004, Spain's conservative government, which had sent thirteen hundred soldiers to Iraq, was defeated at the polls. The soldiers were out within three months. In May of 2005, it was the turn of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, of Italy, President Bush's loudest West European supporter, who had sent three thousand troops; his successor, Romano Prodi, brought them home. In June of this year, Tony Blair was finally obliged to relinquish his grip on Britain's Labour government, largely because of Iraq; the new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, has signalled that he intends to withdraw Britain's troops—some five thousand of the original commitment of forty-five thousand remain—by the end of 2008. Six weeks ago, Poland's premier, the twin brother of the country's President, lost to an opponent whose platform included bringing back the nine hundred Polish troops that are still in Iraq. Other countries whose voters have dispensed with the services of leaders who enrolled them in Bush's "coalition of the willing" include Hungary, Ukraine, Norway, and Slovakia.



A week ago last Saturday, John Howard, the second-longest-serving Prime Minister of Australia, became the newest casualty of this political epidemic. Howard's case is unusual, both for the slavishness with which he has followed Bush's lead and for the comprehensiveness of his defeat. After a decade in office, and at a time of widespread economic contentment, his center-right coalition was decisively ousted at every level of government. He even lost his parliamentary seat. His fealty to Bush, not only on Iraq but also, and at least as important, on climate change, was, of course, not the only factor. But it colored everything.

Two episodes helped solidify the public's fed-upness. As close observers of our own election campaign may recall, the Australian Prime Minister greeted Barack Obama's entry into the Presidential race—and his proposal, at about the same time, for an American withdrawal from Iraq by next March—with a sneer. "If I was running Al Qaeda in Iraq," Howard said, "I would put a circle around March, 2008, and pray as many times as possible for a victory not only for Obama but also for the Democrats." Kevin Rudd, then the leader of Australia's opposition, now Prime Minister-elect, gave him hell for this. But the crispest rebuke came from Obama himself, who, after calling the attack flattering, said, "I would also note that we have close to a hundred and forty thousand troops on the ground now, and my understanding is that Mr. Howard has deployed fourteen hundred. So

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"If you could be any Bob Dylan you wanted to, which Bob Dylan would you be?"

• •

if he's ginned up to fight the good fight in Iraq, I would suggest that he call up another twenty thousand Australians and send them to Iraq. Otherwise, it's just a bunch of empty rhetoric." This point, which an Australian politician might find it awkward to make, exposed the gap between Howard's talk of the civilizational imperative of victory in Iraq and the relative paltriness of his commitment to that victory. Australian troops have suffered zero combat deaths in Iraq to date. Rudd plans to get them out before any occur. He also plans to sign the Kyoto climate-change protocol in Bali this week, leaving the United States isolated as the only major Western country to reject it.

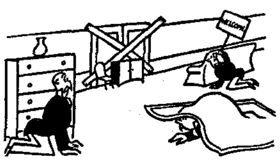
Then, in early September, Bush decided to drop in on the annual summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group to give his old mate an electoral boost. The event, which officially described itself as "the most significant international gathering of an economic kind that Australia has hosted," was supposed to be the zenith of Howard's premiership. It turned out to be the nadir. He was humiliated when Kevin Rudd chatted with the President of China in perfect Mandarin. He was humiliated when a popular TV satire troupe called the Chaser mounted a fake motorcade, flying a Canadian flag and featuring a rented limo with an actor dressed as Osama bin Laden in the back seat, and got within ten yards of Bush's hotel, making a mockery of an elaborate, war-on-terror-inspired security lockdown that had encased downtown Sydney in a "ring of steel." Bush, for his part, made a fool of himself (and, by extension, of his host) by calling APEC "OPEC" and Australian troops "Austrian troops." The Bush boost was a Bush bust.

They don't much like our President in the land Down Under. In the most recent poll by Australia's Lowy Institute, huge majorities disapproved of American foreign policy in general (sixty-three per cent) and of George W. Bush in particular (sixty-nine per cent). But similar majorities take a positive view of America (sixty per cent) and Americans (seventy-six per cent). The rest of the world, alas, is not so discriminating. According to Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes's "America Against the World" (2006), based on the Pew Global Attitudes Project, there was a time, not so long ago, when foreigners "found it easy to say their problem with America was really President Bush, not a considered judgment of the American people. But the results of the 2004 U.S. presidential election made that rationalization untenable." An avalanche of new international polls—from Pew, the German Marshall Fund, the BBC, and others—show that anti-Americanism has reached astronomical levels almost everywhere and has solidified even in the Northern European belt from Britain to Poland. "Countries that would once have supported American foreign policy on principle, simply out of solidarity or friendship, will now have to be cajoled, or paid, to join us," Anne Applebaum, a conservative commentator not given to sentimentality about "world opinion," wrote recently in the Washington *Post*. "Count that—along with the lives of soldiers and civilians, the dollars and equipment—as another cost of the war."

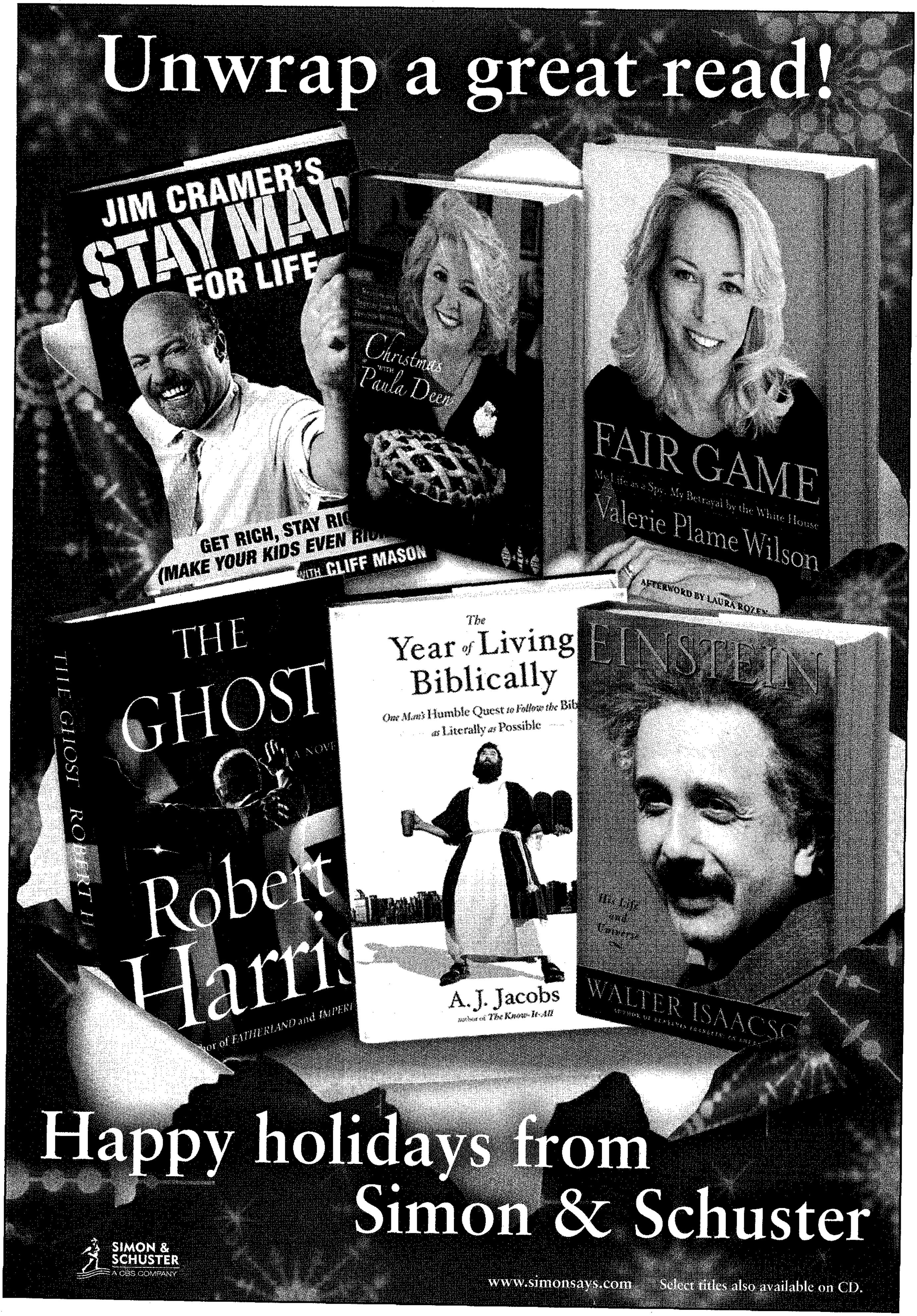
Last week's gathering of Israeli and (Sunni) Arab leaders at Annapolis was a sign that it has finally dawned on the Bush Administration that its six-year policy of ignoring the Israeli-Palestinian morass has aggravated America's troubles in the Middle East. The President may at last have realized that while the issue is not the sole cause of Islamist extremism, it cannot continue to fester—for the sake not only of Israeli survival and justice for the Palestinians but also of beginning to restore some of the global influence and esteem this Administration has squandered. But in suddenly capping six years of obtuse neglect with a one-year timeline, President Bush has probably dithered too long to have any hope of solving the world's most complicated and persistent rebus. His late awakening is yet another cost of the Iraq war. Those costs keep mounting, and they're not likely to abate until there's regime change a little closer to home.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DISTURBING THE PEACE
NINJA HUNT



In retrospect, it figures that a serial "ninja burglar" would turn up on Staten Island, a borough whose biggest cultural export, the Wu-Tang Clan, long ago nicknamed the place Shaolin, in honor of kung-fu movies. This particular bandit,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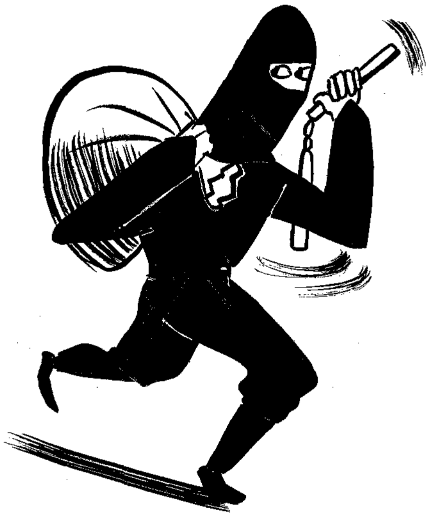
who is now thought to have robbed eighteen homes on the island in the past seven months, acquired his honorific in September, when he encountered a Dongan Hills resident named Phil Chiolo while raiding Chiolo's home. He was dressed all in black, with a black face mask, Chiolo said, and he carried nun-chucks, which he used to club Chiolo in the chest, head, and shins before Chiolo was able to retaliate by stabbing at him with a steak knife.

Chiolo, who suffered a welt near his collarbone, said the other day that he is fine, but Staten Island has since gone ninja mad, with the burglar enjoying a kind of romantic outlaw notoriety. Other victims have likened him to a gazelle or a cat ("very athletic, very quiet, and very fast"), capable of scaling walls and leaping noiselessly out windows. (No one has heard him speak.) The "word on the street," according to a Staten Island *Advance* editorial, was that ninja costumes were going to be an especially popular Halloween choice around the borough this year, and several weeks ago a local home-security company incorporated an image of a rappelling ninja in its print ads. The *Post's* police blotter, last month, included a small item about a man who, after allegedly attempting to flood his landlord's apartment, exclaimed to the cops, "I know who the ninja is." If he knew, apparently he didn't tell, because recently the ninja burglar struck again—twice in one night, escaping with a hundred and thirty thousand dollars' worth of loot. "Now he's the famous ninja who's disturbing our peace," Dr. Mohammad Khalid, a dentist from Pakistan who lives in Todt Hill, said last week, while standing under some trees near the scene of the latest break-ins. "He looks like a really professional robber that does not leave any marks or anything."

The N.Y.P.D. has assigned a task force to the ninja caper, and its officers, according to the *Advance*, have resorted to asking strangers point blank, "Are you the ninja burglar?" Dr. Khalid, who serves as the president of the Iron Hills Civic Association, could be called the primary civilian combatant. For the past two months, he has employed a supplementary private security detail for the organization's membership, which includes six hundred homes, and it seemed no accident, he thought, that this latest spree occurred just a block outside the prescribed range of his surveillance crew.

It was Wednesday, which, as some amateur profilers have noted, is the ninja burglar's favorite night, but no one would have mistaken Khalid for a ninja as he stood gazing at neighboring windows in the dark. Khalid is rotund and deliberate. He wore a suit and tie, and was on his way to meet with another civic association to discuss expanding the surveillance range. "Yesterday at my own home, which is about half a mile from here, my garage was open, because somebody came to fix my computer printer," he said. "He opened the garage and went down to the basement to get some cables. Five police guys came in and they grabbed him: 'What are you doing here?' He said, 'I'm fixing the doctor's computer.'" Khalid smiled. He believes the ninja's days are numbered.



Ninja burglar

On Thursday, as Police Commissioner Ray Kelly prepared to address a gathering of concerned Staten Islanders on the East Shore, a group of ninjas in training at the Island Martial Arts Academy demonstrated considerably greater courtesy than their renegade cousin. Instead of breaking and entering, they bowed before a doorway and spoke Korean salutations. None of them appeared to have stab wounds, although many were quite proficient with nun-chucks, given their age (five to nine, which distinguishes them from the academy's peewee ninjas, who are three to five). Some held pieces of plywood with their names written on them. It was board-breaking week.

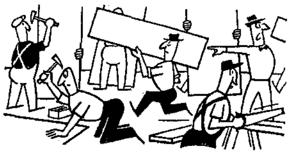
The academy's master, Pete Paramithis, was careful to point out that all his nun-chucks are made of foam, and he expressed concern that the ninja burglar was giving karate a bad name. Representatives of the N.Y.P.D. had already dropped by, looking for leads. Paramithis had a theory that the burglar, if he had any training at all, might be the product of an older, more punitive approach to martial-arts instruction, involving pushups, as opposed to the positive reinforcement that he favors. "Negative training creates little monsters," Paramithis said. "It's just like 'The Karate Kid.' You've got the good guy, and the guy who's, like, '*Kill, kill!*'" Paramithis teaches concepts like "bully awareness" and "stranger danger." He picked up a pen and wrote "Codes of Ninja" on a sheet of paper, above the words "concentration," "courage," "confidence," "perseverance," and "discipline."

Meanwhile, at the Shaolin Kung Fu Temple, near the North Shore, Sifu Paula Wong, an instructor, seemed unaware of the burglar and his legend. "We're not familiar with the ninja, since a ninja is an assassin," she said. "Our training is more philosophy, with Buddhism and philosophies like Bruce Lee."

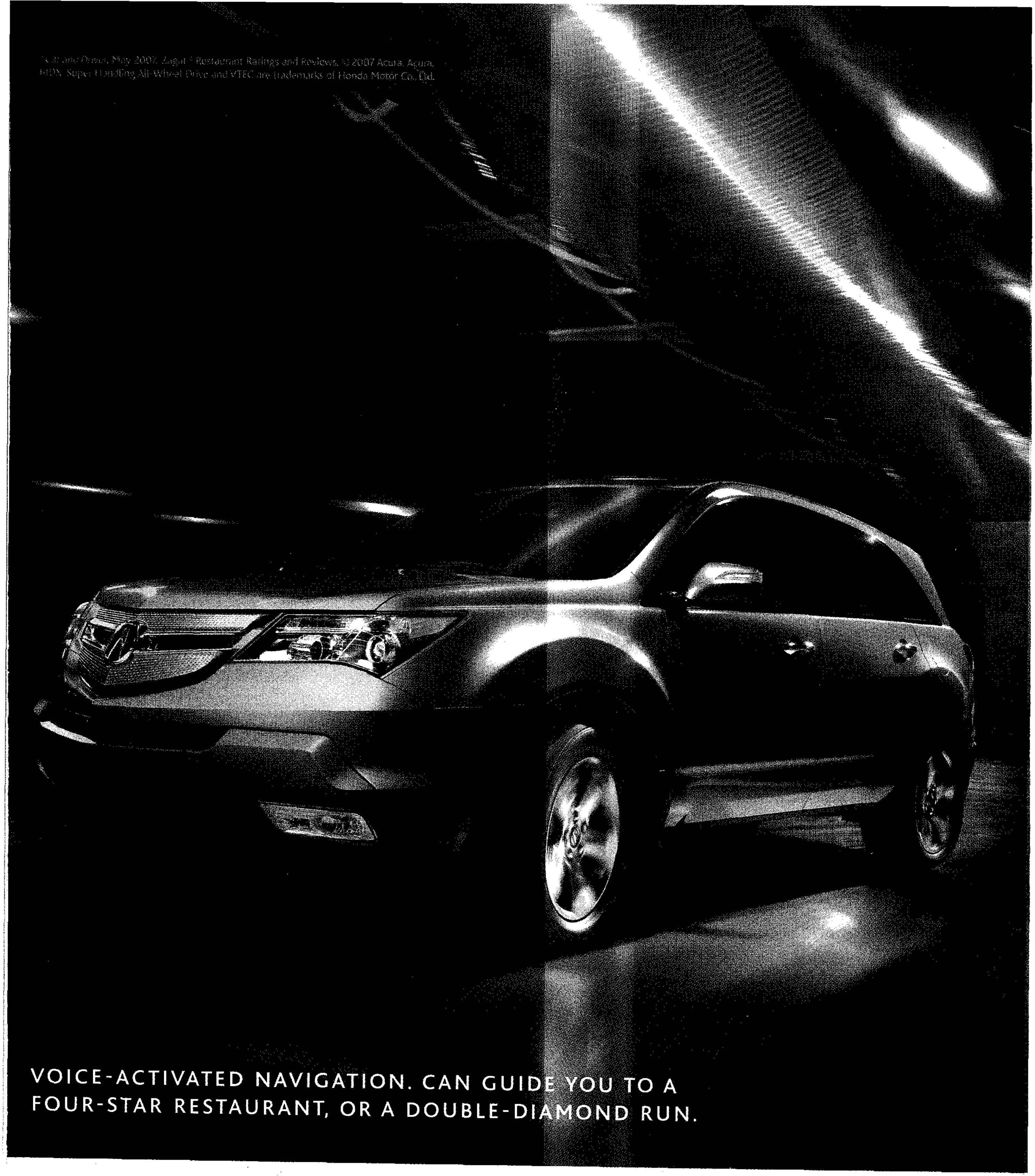
—*Ben McGrath*

DEPT. OF SANCTUARIES

FACE-LIFT



The last time this department looked into the Eldridge Street Synagogue, down in Ben Shahn country, near the Manhattan Bridge, was almost twenty years ago, when the restoration of the synagogue—the first and the grandest of the temples built by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe—was just beginning. Decades of enforced neglect had left the sanctuary sealed off and with pigeons roosting in the rafters. It was, this magazine's correspondent wrote then, "like the Twilight Zone. The room was covered with dust. There were prayer shawls strewn about, and ceramic spittoons on the floor. . . . In the ark were thirty Torahs, in various stages of decom-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position." This week, at last, the work is complete, with a spiffiness that would have been inconceivable in that less flush time for the city and the neighborhood. And though the project may have set some sort of Landmarks Preservation Commission record (Longest Time for Continuous Restoration, Synagogue), it has also returned the grand, stained-glass-and-polished-wood-neo-Moorish-Yiddish-Romanesque-Renaissance-Gothic-You-Find-a-Name-for-It space back to its neighborhood and to New Yorkers. Walk down Eldridge Street now and you see the synagogue, almost hallucinatory in its luminosity, wedged in among the workaday tenements and Chinese storefronts like a bright and happy dollhouse.

Eldridge opened in 1887, when four local Jewish merchants—a sausage king, a plate-glass dealer, a banker, and a real-estate guy—hired a heretofore undistinguished architectural firm called Herter Brothers to build them a synagogue. But the restoration has returned the temple to the way it was in 1907, when electricity was installed, and a row of light bulbs was used to edge a panel displaying the Ten Commandments, in the style of a marquee. The glory of the synagogue is the scale of its interior—a seventy-foot-high-by-thirty-foot-wide barrel vault, whose two-tiered design (the second tier, which wraps around three sides, rather than being just at the back, was originally meant for Orthodox women) makes it seem even higher than it is and gives it spectacular acoustics. The first thing that the founders did was to bring in Pinchas Minkowsky, a then legendary cantor from Odessa, for the then immense sum of fifteen thousand dollars, on a then unheard-of five-year contract—the cantorial A-Rod of his time.

"The synagogue was the first grand gesture on the part of the Eastern European Jews who were arriving in New York," Annie Polland, the house historian, explained the other day, as final touches were being put on hand-stencilled wall decorations. "Until then, the new congregations took over old Protestant churches. Eldridge was built not just as a statement to the neighborhood but as a statement to the German Jews uptown." Central Synagogue, on Lexington Avenue, and an earlier edition of Temple Emanu-El, on Grand and Clinton Streets, had already opened; Eldridge, downtown, was defiantly grand, and insistently "Orthodox," a word that was already in use. "When you bought a seat to pray at Eldridge, the contract promised that if the congregation ever allowed organ music, or men and women singing together in the choir, you'd get double your money back," Polland said. "It was a strong anti-Reform statement."

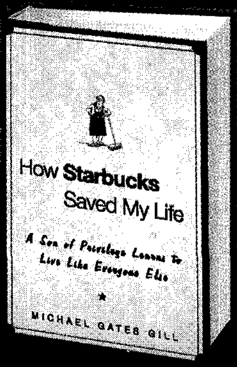
The circumstances that led to the gradual neglect of the sanctuary are familiar, though: as Jews moved away from the neighborhood, it became harder and harder to summon a minyan. Finally, in the nineteen-fifties, the worshippers moved into a small room below the great sanctuary for their services. The two dozen members who have held on throughout the renovation are still down

---

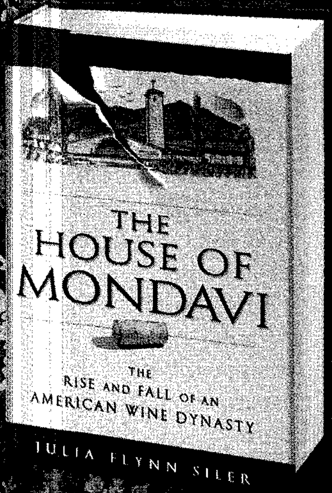
EMOTICONS DURING WARTIME

:-)	No new attacks reported today.
:-(	New attack reported today.
=|:-)=	This e-mail is being monitored by Uncle Sam for your protection.
:-x	I'd rather not say in an e-mail that's being monitored for my protection.
:-w	Our current leader speaks with forked tongue.
*:o)	Our current leader is a bozo.
/:-=(	Our current leader in some ways resembles Adolf Hitler, at least in his disregard for civil liberties during wartime.
:-o	Uh-oh, what was that?
:-@	I hear screaming.
B)	Now donning protective goggles.
.-)	Good Sammy Davis, Jr., movie on tonight.
<|-)	Yes, the current conflict resembles Vietnam.
+<:-)	Pope to make appeal for peace.
(:3	No, *I* am the Walrus.
:(=)	Interesting Jimmy Carter piece in today's *Times.*
[:-)	I'm listening to my iPod.
3:-o	Bovine encephalitis attack!
:-)8	Latest George Will column still doesn't get it.
@:-[--	New Osama bin Laden message released.
8-/	Local chemical attack causing blindness.
:-#	Kiss your ass goodbye.

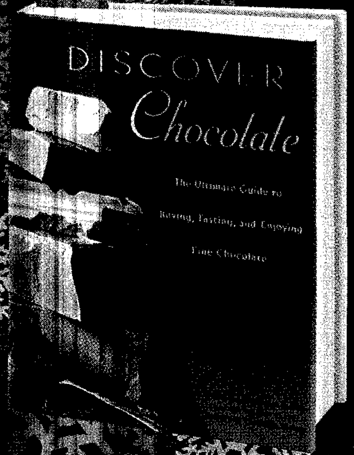
—*Tom McNichol*


How Starbucks Saved My Life
A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else
MICHAEL GATES GILL

"In the best tradition of *The New Yorker*, *How Starbucks Saved My Life* is one great read."
—*The Wall Street Journal*
As seen on *CBS Sunday Morning*

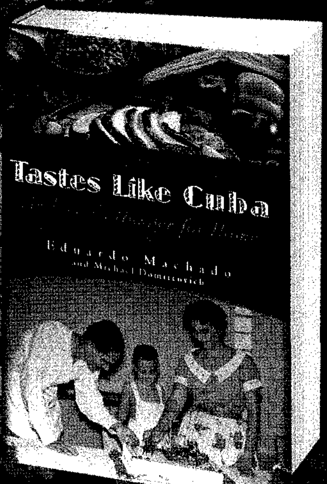

THE HOUSE OF MONDAVI
THE RISE AND FALL OF AN AMERICAN WINE DYNASTY
JULIA FLYNN SILER

"Explores the Mondavis' bumpy journey in grand and fascinating detail." —James Laube, *Wine Spectator*
**New York Times* Bestseller


DISCOVER Chocolate
The Ultimate Guide to Buying, Tasting, and Enjoying Fine Chocolate

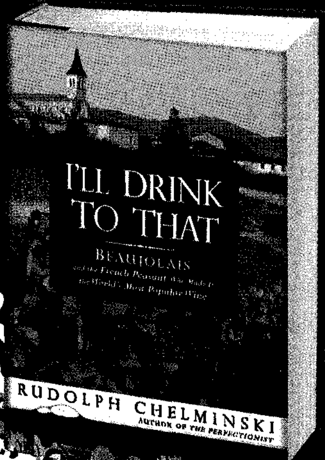
A book for true chocophiles, revealing the fascinating intricacies of buying and savoring the world's best chocolate.

Five holiday treats that won't have you loosening your belt.


Tastes Like Cuba
Eduardo Machado and Michael Domitrovich

"A savory memoir...organized around gustatory memories and favorite recipes."
—*The Seattle Times*

"A stylish history of French wine-making."
—*Publishers Weekly*


I'LL DRINK TO THAT
BEAUJOLAIS
RUDOLPH CHELMINSKI
AUTHOR OF THE PERFECTIONIST

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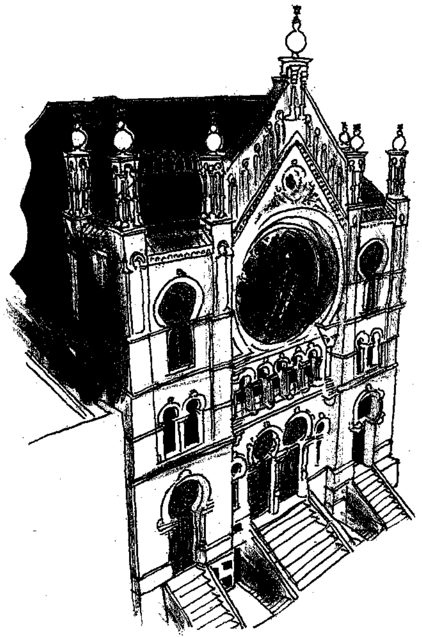
there. The restored sanctuary will be used for services on holidays and special occasions, but it's also going to be open to the public as a museum of the immigrant experience on the Lower East Side.

"There aren't many Jews moving here, but I hope the congregation will expand," Polland said. "The hipster Jews are back," she added with a laugh. As she looked around the shining space, she lowered her voice and murmured, "They say that there's a lot of numerological significance encoded in the proportions of Eldridge. There are twelve windows upstairs for the twelve tribes, and five downstairs for the five books, but my favorite is that there are four doors leading into the synagogue, perhaps symbolizing the four matriarchs—Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, and Leah. Three of them are also the names of three of the wives of the four merchants who founded it. They got in somehow."



Eldridge Street Synagogue

She walked over, past the restored bimah, or pulpit, and opened the door of the ark. "I've heard that the velvet lining of the ark is unchanged from the day the synagogue opened, because it's been completely protected from light and air," she said. She cautiously slid open the door. Inside, the pleated red velvet looked as fresh and festive as the icing on a birthday cake—direct from 1887, and still as good as new.

—*Adam Gopnik*

SLEEPERS

YOUNG FOGY

Last Christmas, the British publisher Short Books issued—along with "Doctor, Have You Got a Minute?" and "Ever Dated a Psycho?"—a two-hundred-and-seventy-two-page half memoir, half manual titled "Amo, Amas, Amat . . . and All That," intended, according to its author, Harry Mount, "to give you a pleasurable breeze through the main principles of Latin." The book was small (bathroom-basket ready), sweet (dedicated to the author's brother and sister, "*Mons Maximus et Mons Maxima*"), friendly (cover: cartoon Roman in a toga), and irreverent in a way that might appeal to the sort of *rara avis* (see page 247) driven to hilarity by a story Mount tells about defacing the cover of "Kennedy's Shorter Latin Primer" to read "Kennedy's Shortbread Eating Primer." But that *avis* was not so *rara* after all: the book turned out to be the Tickle Me Elmo of the belletristic-stocking-stuffer trade, selling more than ninety thousand copies. "*Mirabile dictu!*" the *Independent* declared. "*Lingua Latina superavit!*"

Chances are, then, that the relative who gave you Lynne Truss's "Eats, Shoots & Leaves" in 2004 will probably show up this Christmas with "Carpe Diem: Put a Little Latin in Your Life," the American edition of "Amo," whose original subtitle—"How to Become a Latin Lover"—was nixed after an acquaintance of Mount's mistook it for a book of antiquarian sex tips.

Mount, a thirty-six-year-old Oxford graduate and journalist, was visiting the New Greek and Roman galleries of the Met the other day, dressed in a blue suit with a paper poppy pinned to the lapel, musing about an Ionic column from the third century B.C. "It's very useful, if you'll forgive the vulgarity, to remember the word 'dick.' D-I-C-C, for Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite. Ionic is a more feminine column. It's always got the, as it were, twirly-whirly girls' curls," he said, pointing out a pair of spiralling volutes.

In his book, Mount recasts Kingsley Amis's idea that bad English speakers fall into two categories—Berks (crass, careless) and Wankers (priggish, over-precise)—saying that Latin readers have a dangerous tendency toward the latter. "People use the Latinate to show off or to be evasive," Mount explained. "If, using the Anglo-Saxon word, you said, 'I lied,' you'd get the sack. Now, if you said, 'I was economic with the actuality,' you'd get out of it."

Mount admits to being something of a Wanker himself, and his book, along with his ridicule of the public education system, has caused a measure of class controversy in the U.K. He began his study of the language as a nine-year-old at a London school called North Bridge House, where Latin was mandatory for boys but not for girls ("a hangover from an old-fashioned gentleman's education, I suppose"). While he was under the tutelage of the magnificently named Miss Pickersgill, his appreciation of the language blossomed. "Doing Latin was a bit like wearing X-ray specs," he said. "Everywhere I went, I had the pleasure of knowledge."

At Oxford, Mount was tapped for the exclusive Bullingdon Club; he enjoys a certain notoriety for having been rolled down a hill in a portable toilet. "It was like coming out of Dracula's coffin," he recalled, at a diner near the Met. "I was watching 'Henry V' on the plane over—there's an accepted period of laddish drunkenness in all cultures. The Greeks were keen on wine and sexual misbehavior. There's a great bit of Plato, often read at weddings, about two halves of the same soul being joined. They always neglect to read the part that says the greatest love of all is between two *male* halves."

Mount returned to the subject of his book. "This genre is for people who long to know about difficult things but want them delivered in a jokey, anecdotal way. There's a tremendous tendency to think the world's going to the dogs, but there's an enduring respect for proper things." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a red leather notebook, which he opened to a page filled with schoolboy jottings. He said he loved "Church Going," the Philip Larkin poem about a young man who will "forever be surprising / A hunger in himself to be more serious."

—*Lauren Collins*

Dungarpur, India

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LIFE AND LETTERS

READING MY FATHER

A writer's triumphs and his torments.

BY ALEXANDRA STYRON

In those days cheap apartments were almost impossible to find in Manhattan, so I had to move to Brooklyn.

—*"Sophie's Choice."*

The first time I read that line, the opening of "Sophie's Choice," I was thirteen years old. My father's novel, which he had spent most of my childhood writing, had just arrived in bound-galley form. Curious and proud (the advance word on the book was, I knew from talk around the house, excellent), I took a copy to school in my book bag. During recess and study hall, I began to read "Sophie's Choice" in a conspicuously serious fashion, hoping to attract interest in me and what I believed was my father's extremely important achievement. As it turned out, no one was very interested, least of all me. I found the book unbelievably boring. The difficult vocabulary and the historical references eluded me, page after page, until, at last, I let them sail by unchallenged.

And then I got to page 45, where Stingo, the narrator, who so obviously stood in for my father, lapses into a dream he describes as "the most ferociously erotic hallucination I had ever experienced." Further on, he elaborates, in extended libidinal detail: "She wiggled toward me, a wanton nymph with moist and parted mouth, and now bending down over my bare belly . . ." If you've read the book, you probably remember this reverie, along with other interludes so vivid and numerous that I can think of few similar literary novels that compare in sheer volume of sexual documentation. If you read the book, you probably laughed. I remember leaning against a railing outside the locker room and hoping not to throw up on my Bass Weejuns. "Calm down," I told myself, furtively peering again under the mint-green paper cover. "This is fiction. Daddy didn't really *do* all these things."

Mortified, I put the galleys back on the kitchen sideboard. I didn't finish "Sophie's Choice" for twenty-five years.

My father, William Styron, died just over a year ago. Famous by his mid-twenties, he helped create the cliché of the gifted, hard-drinking, bellicose writer which gave so much of twentieth-century literature a muscular, glamorous aura. He was not an engaged parent: he didn't eat dinner with us or attend school plays. He never threw a ball, built a tree house, or tucked us into bed. I can't remember him teaching me how to do anything except open a wine

William Styron and his wife, Rose, in the dining room of their home in Roxbury, Connecticut, in 1972. Photograph by Jill Krementz.

bottle, a job that I did on my tiptoes and with great dedication each night before I went to bed.

I guess I always knew that this was eccentric. The Styrons—me, my father, my mother, Rose, and my older siblings, Susanna, Polly, and Tom—were definitely different. Not that we were special, or necessarily unique in the world, but, from a child's point of view, it was pretty clear who the statistical outliers were. Roxbury, Connecticut, where we lived, is now a hamlet of second homes and impeccably renovated Colonial manors in the southern hills of Litchfield County. But when my parents arrived, in the mid-fifties, Roxbury was still both simple and remote.

They had met in 1951, when Bill Styron, the twenty-six-year-old author of "Lie Down in Darkness," spoke to a graduate writing class that Rose Burgunder was taking at Johns Hopkins. The following autumn, Rose, travelling in Italy, dropped a note in Bill's box at the American Academy in Rome, where, as a Prix de Rome winner, he was living and writing. In May of 1953, they were married at the Campidoglio in the company of a small party of friends that included Peter Matthiessen, Irwin Shaw, and John Marquand, Jr.

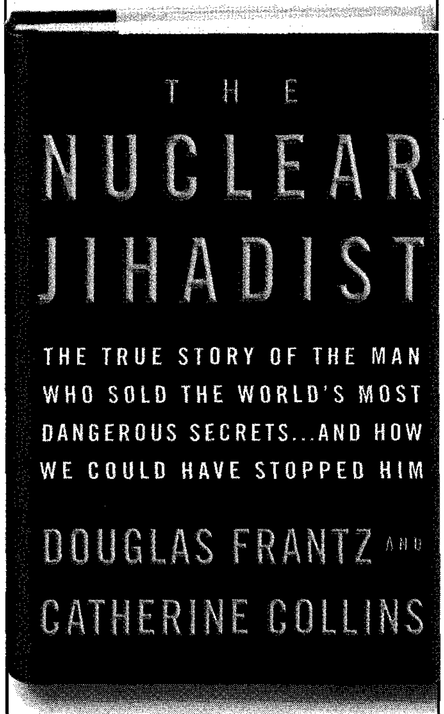
Born into a family of wealthy, assimilated Jews in Baltimore, Mum had earned her widowed mother's displeasure by falling in with a struggling artist. When their engagement was announced, my grandmother hired a private detective to go to Virginia and dig into my father's background. Her meddling nearly derailed their romance. Later on, however, particularly when my father's success confirmed the wisdom of her daughter's heart, Nana developed a strong affection for her unusual son-in-law.

My parents' European honeymoon stretched into a year; it was followed by a brief residency in New York and then the move to Connecticut. Settling in Roxbury, among farmers and tradesmen, they found themselves in a pastoral outpost far from the distractions of city life. They bought an old farmstead on a dirt road and, in the early days, let the cows stay on, grazing outside their window. The house, painted a cheerful yellow and added on to over the years, creaked beneath the feet of their growing family. There was a tennis court, and a pond for ice-cold swims. Lilacs and apple trees bloomed in the spring. A giant willow stood at the bottom of a gently sloping hill. My mother and father spent fifty years there, fashioning a life that ministered to the frequently incompatible pursuits of child rearing and artistic creation. Daddy's work was always the fulcrum, while Mum—cheerfully, giddily, perilously—manned the controls. It was a world of privilege and irregularity.

In stark contrast to my father's cerebral reserve stood my mother's comprehensive generosity. Her profligacy was—to my father's frequent horror—also the signal force of our family life. She used her checkbook to paper over the cracks in our lives, to buy us the good times she felt we were entitled to. She denied us nothing, embellishing our world with a crazy kind of splendor. Our Christmases were lavish, our vacations even more so. We had a summer place on Martha's Vineyard and a pied-à-terre in Manhattan. While my friends enjoyed a trip to Danbury for a movie or back-to-school clothes, Mum took me to Saks Fifth Avenue and then to a Broadway show. We had dogs and cats, but also horses and hamsters, lovebirds and squirrels, boa constrictors that nestled in the couch cushions, a nanny goat named Feather, who wore out her welcome when she climbed into bed with my father. And then there were all the people. Full- and part-time helpers, plus a variety of moonlighters—Leo from Tommy's Dry Cleaners, Sandy from the dairy farm down the hill—were staggered in loose succession to get us through the day.

A late riser, my father worked at both our homes in outbuildings, which were strictly off limits to us. On the Vineyard, his study door bore a sign that warned, "Verboten." My mother wrote and published poetry, and, in the seventies, began a second career as a human-rights activist. Trips on behalf of Amnesty International often took her away from home, to Latin America and the Soviet Union. But my parents' life was sociable, too. An indefatigable hostess, Mum drew out my father's gracious Southern side when they entertained. I might come home from school

"TERRIFYING."*



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to find Vladimir Horowitz playing our badly out-of-tune piano, or Lillian Hellman cheating in a Scrabble game with my mother; James Baldwin in the guesthouse, John Belushi eating a tuna sandwich in the kitchen. My friend Elizabeth and I once became sick with laughter spying from my bedroom window on Frank Sinatra in the outdoor shower (his superstar status far less tantalizing to a couple of seven-year-olds than the sight of his private parts). People simply showed up, and they were always encouraged to stay, *stay!* There was a time when it seemed that if you hadn't had a drink on my parents' Vineyard porch or a piece of our housekeeper Daphne's famous fried chicken, either you were a Republican or you must have got lost.

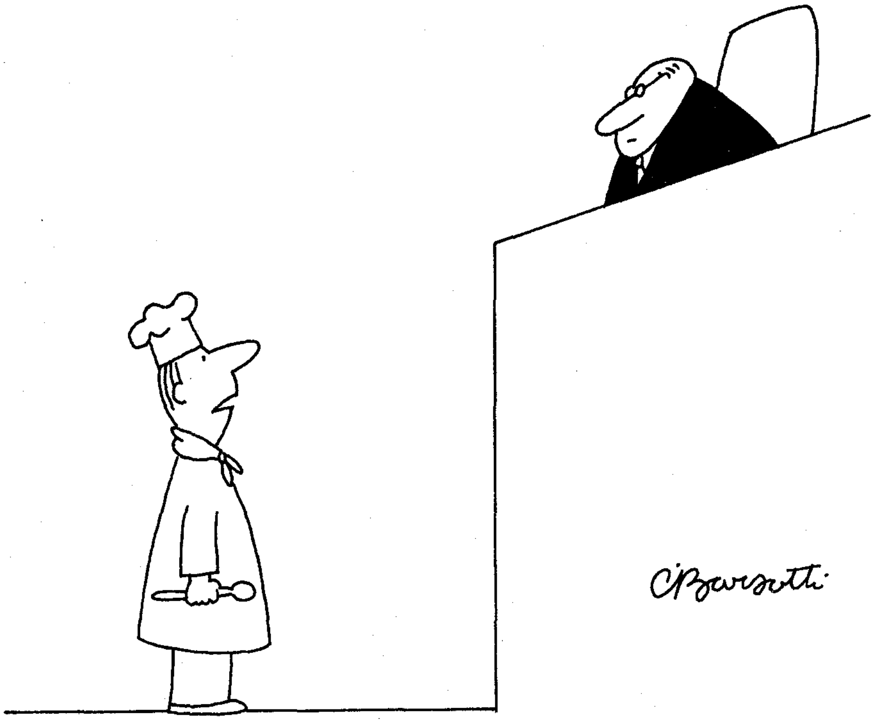
Everyone adored my mother, but my father was the real show. Kicked back with his Scotch and cigar, mordant wit on high display, Daddy was never more alluring than when in the mood to socialize, or "chew the fat," as he liked to say. Tales of life in the Marines would meander into an amusing jeremiad on whichever right-wing "prick" was in the day's news, segueing into an ardent discussion about politics or a public scandal that someone in the room had the inside story on. As the night wore on, Daddy's normally accentless speech took on the mellow drawl of his Tidewater youth. I would fall asleep beneath the coffee table, listening to the provocative, profanity-laced conversations.

These convivial days and nights were bright spots in my childhood, shining some light on a home that was often shrouded in a kind of mid-level gloom. For although Daddy's keen mind and his literary stature drew a collection of friends and admirers, his churlishness just as often drove them away. Indeed, without my mother's cheer I doubt that anyone (his children included) would have stuck around. He did not mince words, regardless of a guest's proximity, when he was feeling anti-social. Nor did he care who heard him unleash his wrath upon whatever (a bad meal, an exorbitant bill) or whoever (usually my mother) vexed him. He had terrible telephone manners; even my parents' closest friends hung up when he answered.

At times querulous and taciturn, cutting and remote, melancholy when he was sober and rageful when he was drinking, my father inspired fear and loathing in his children more often than it is comfortable to admit. His turbulent moods—mitigated by a good day's work, medicated by a good long drink—were the weather in our ecosystem. The capriciousness of his anger was astonishing. I once watched him curse, chew apart, and then hurl across the kitchen a pencil that had had the gall to lose its graphite point. In the time it took to sweep up the remains of a toy left foolishly in his line of vision, your day could turn as splintery as a thousand shards of bright-colored plastic.

Despite all this, Daddy and I had a singular bond. Because I am the youngest by a good measure (seven years separate me from my brother), I was also an only child of sorts. My siblings were all away at school by the time I was in fourth grade. And though my father's peevishness certainly bore heavy responsibility for my mother's increasing absences (they fought frequently, and loudly, when I was a child), he and I shared a vague sense of abandonment when she was gone. Through much of my childhood, Mum set a schedule that I couldn't possibly keep track of. She tried to fill the gaps, but sometimes the whole apparatus simply fell apart. And when that happened it was just Daddy and me. Less like father and daughter than like a couple of cautious, shipwrecked sailors, we eyed each other warily, then worked the situation to our mutual advantage. My strategy went something like this: I was a smart-aleck, which I knew Daddy liked. But I didn't give him any lip, which would have been disastrous. I grilled my own cheese sandwich, but I got out of his way when he needed the stove. I came with my homework questions to the door of the living room (where he worked at night, standing at the bar, Mozart blaring), but I let him finish his thought before interrupting. He didn't yell much when we were alone. On the contrary, when we bumped into each other we liked to make each other laugh. He tried to spook me with fictional advisories on escaped convicts. I feigned indifference, or made a sarcastic retort that I knew would amuse him. And, whether out of apprehension or something more benign, we offered each other mutual respect.

Once in a while, my father picked me up at school. I remember a warm afternoon when I was eight or nine, the sunroof on his old red Mercedes pouring light onto my knees as we traced the curves of Route 199.



"Not guilty, Your Honor. The menu clearly says 'Death by Chocolate.'"

"What kind of instrument would a little girl your age play?"

I knew that he was thinking about his work, and that that was why he was asking. I didn't know much about music, but I wanted to be a help.

"I don't know. A piano?"

"No. That's too big. Something you could carry. A violin?"

"Nah," I replied. It seemed boring. Besides, I didn't know anyone who played the violin.

"The flute?"

My friend Lili had a flute.

"Yeah. Maybe," I said.

We didn't speak of it again, nor did I have any idea where a little girl's fancy fit in my father's imagination.

I began reading "Sophie's Choice" again in the spring of 2005, but this time I was startled by recognition. I, too, had crossed the East River in search of affordable housing. In 2002, after seventeen years in Manhattan, years that included college and graduate school, I moved with my husband to Brooklyn. We were part of a growing wave of upper-but-not-too-upper-middle-class young families priced out of the Manhattan real-estate market. The borough's identity now bears little resemblance to either the first-generation Babel of my father's time there or the disparaging "bridge-and-tunnel" designation of later years.

Like Stingo, Daddy had arrived in New York from Virginia in the late forties, with plans to become a great writer. Boarding at a shabby "residence club" in Manhattan, he did a brief stint as an assistant editor at McGraw-Hill, before a mediocre performance prompted his dismissal. With a few promising chapters of a novel already down on paper, he decided to concentrate on his writing, a plan that would require him to find cheaper accommodations. And thus my father, like Stingo, landed in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

It was not until 1973, when he started writing "Sophie's Choice," that he revisited those years. (His previous novel, "The Confessions of Nat Turner," had won him the Pulitzer Prize and a fair amount of controversial attention.) Daddy was a quarter-century, a hundred miles, and a world away from the postwar Brooklyn he had known. The aspirations of the pointy-headed Virginia boy he describes in "Sophie's Choice," lost in a sea of Mitteleuropean immigrants, were understandably focussed across the river. After all, Daddy's literary heroes—Fitzgerald, Wolfe—got drunk at the White Horse, not Farrell's. Even Walt Whitman admired "mast-hemmed Manhattan" from his ferry. Success would buy my father's escape, just as it had before.

The only child of a marine engineer and his musically inclined wife, my father grew up in Newport News, on the banks of the James River, in modest, Presbyterian-style comfort. The stories he used to tell me about his youth were sharp—seeing a television for the first time at the 1939 World's Fair; a fall in which he'd bumped his head and suffered a day of amnesia—but selective. I was always struck by this, since he had an encyclopedic memory and would astound people with his virtually perfect recall of places, names, and dates. In his later years, Daddy's reticence revealed itself for what it was: a protective barrier against a tide of grief.

My grandmother, Pauline Styron, died when my father was fourteen, but she had suffered from metastatic breast cancer for more than a decade before. She was, literally, dying throughout my father's childhood. Publicly, Daddy described those years as "idyllic" and "pleasant," but the truth was something much lonelier and more corrosive. His mother's disabling pain was rarely spoken of, and, when she died, no one encouraged him to mourn her. Instead, my grandfather, doting but bereft, sent Daddy off to boarding school, at Christchurch, in 1940. There he began to hone both his literary skills and his burgeoning skepticism about the Jim Crow South. By the time he'd completed two tours of duty in the Marines and an impatient undergraduate tenure at Duke University, he knew two things. He wanted to go north and he wanted to be a writer. Temporarily stuck in Flatbush, he found himself, as he describes Stingo, "another lean and lonesome Southerner wandering amid the Kingdom of the Jews." Brooklyn ultimately provided him with one of his finest inspirations, but, at the time, its

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hinterlands were not exactly the destination he had in mind.

It wasn't really what I had in mind, either, but the shock of marriage, pregnancy, and motherhood, along with some ill-considered real-estate choices, had left me tired and confused. We forsook our first Brooklyn rental, a drafty duplex on Bergen Street in Boerum Hill, when the landlady ignored pleas to address a growing vermin problem. Seduced by an appealing ad in the *Times* ("Dumbo/Vinegar Hill. Four bedrooms, European style elegance, W/D, closets galore"), we saw our second apartment the day after a magnificent snowstorm. Parking on the quiet cobblestone street, we checked the number on a tidy brick house before us. Our son wiggled contentedly in his infant seat; the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges glittered under a fretwork of white. "I've always wanted to live over here," my husband, Ed, a knowledgeable urban adventurer, declared.

Named for an Irish battle, Vinegar Hill was settled in the early nineteenth century by immigrants who had come to work in the nearby factories and shipyard. A century and a half later, Robert Moses drew the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway through the western shoulder of the borough, isolating Vinegar Hill and the adjacent Dumbo neighborhood from Brooklyn Heights and downtown. Churches were torn down, empty lots converted for industrial use, and the cluster of town houses became a marginal artists' frontier, a tiny outer-borough pre-Prada SoHo.

Not that I knew any of that at the time. I knew only that the advertisement, and the cultured Belgian accent of the woman who answered our call, promised to deliver me from the glum parade of tiny, light-starved two bedrooms we'd seen in the previous weeks. The apartment, a third-floor walkup, *was* lovely, and vastly bigger than anywhere Ed or I had ever lived in New York. We begged the landlords to take us, and they did.

Trouble exposed itself soon enough. Our son started walking, and there wasn't, it seemed, anyplace for him to walk to. I got pregnant again. We had mice again. And then the snow melted to reveal that we were surrounded on three sides by an enormous power plant, a sprawling housing project, and the tow-pound side of the dubiously renascent Brooklyn Navy Yard. Well, I had *seen* all these features before, but they didn't seem quite so nefarious until I'd been embedded in them for a while. Shortly after the move, Ed began working overseas part-time. And then our dog, a large elderly Labrador, developed trouble taking all those stairs. Every task seemed difficult, every vista ugly or threatening.

I began to dream of the countryside. Of light, and space, and objects found in the natural world that my children could learn the names of ("smashed rat" not being one of them). When I was single, I'd maintained a mental video of my future offspring loosed onto a large back lawn. The breeze would lift their hair; they would be barefoot and free from worry. It was an improved version of my own childhood, with all the shadows Photo-Shopped out. I sent the dog to live in Connecticut, and told Ed that I wanted to move there, too.

From June of 2004 well into the following spring, I went real-estate crazy. With the aid of a maniacally upbeat broker, I saw dozens of houses, in an ever-widening radius and price range. Balmy summer turned to russet fall turned to Christmas in New England turned to insufferable February (how had I forgotten that season?). The bloom fell off the rose, and off every living thing in the county, replaced by icy roads and darkness at 3 P.M. My remarkably agreeable husband became a little less sanguine about the prospect of hours of commuting. And even I began to entertain unnerving visions of loneliness. After each disappointing foray, I would come back to the house in Roxbury, where my father was fighting his second major battle with depression. On good days, he sat in the living room, propped like a broken bird keeping warm in the lamplight.

"Hi, Daddy!" I would say as I bounded in. "How are you doing today?"

"Not very well," came the reply, faint and hoarse.

This was not a surprise. Like everyone else in my family, I'd watched my father's decline with a mixture of disbelief and helplessness, but eventually I had learned to compensate. Unable to solve his predicament, I told him instead about my own. I talked about the houses and towns where I'd been. I edited as I went, transforming each dis-

TO BOREDOM

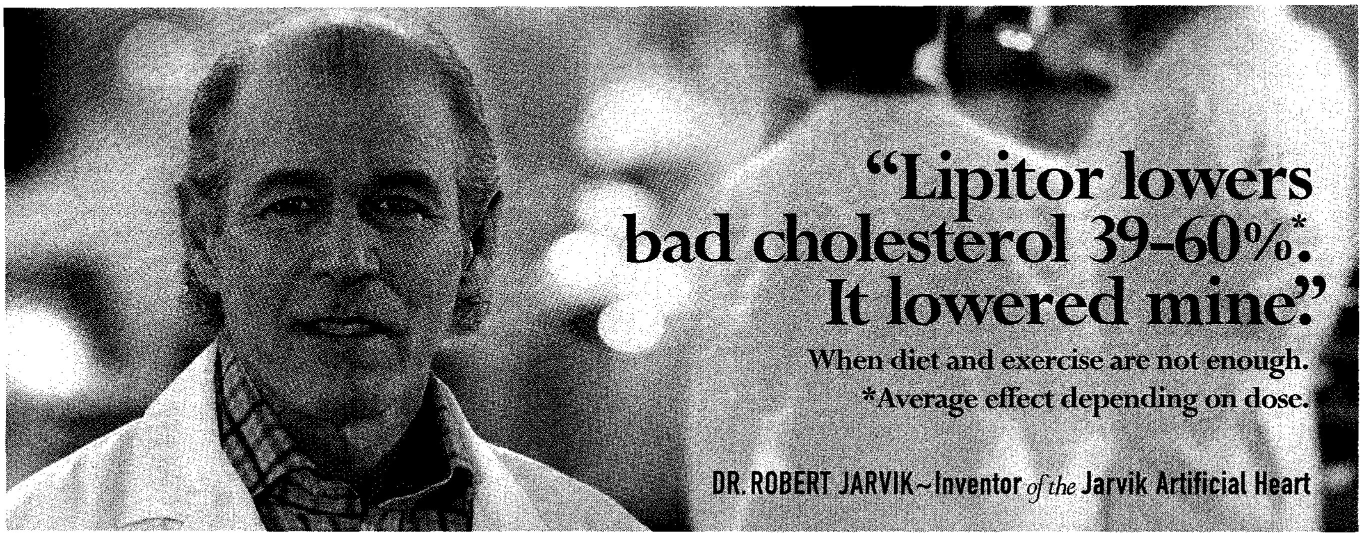
I'm the child of your rainy Sundays.
I watched time crawl
Over the ceiling
Like a wounded fly.

A day would last forever,
Making pellets of bread,
Waiting for a branch
On a bare tree to move.

The silence would deepen,
The sky would darken,
As Grandmother knitted
With a ball of black yarn.

I know Heaven's like that.
In eternity's classrooms,
The angels sit like bored children
With their heads bowed.

—*Charles Simic*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LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant or may become pregnant. If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of rare but serious muscle side effects. Tell your doctor about all medications you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

Please see additional important information on next page.

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WHO IS LIPITOR FOR?

Who can take LIPITOR:

- People who cannot lower their cholesterol enough with diet and exercise
- Adults and children over 10

Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

- Women who are pregnant, may be pregnant, or may become pregnant. LIPITOR may harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant, stop LIPITOR and call your doctor right away.
- Women who are breast-feeding. LIPITOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby.
- People with liver problems
- People allergic to anything in LIPITOR

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Tell your doctor:

- About all medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- If you have muscle aches or weakness
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POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems.** Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain
- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Diarrhea, gas
- Rash
- Constipation
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves. Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

HOW TO TAKE LIPITOR

Do:

- Take LIPITOR as prescribed by your doctor.
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- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

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heartening day into a picaresque adventure, hoping to raise a smile. Sometimes I succeeded, and I knew that he was glad to have my company. But the irony was hard to escape. This brilliant man, whose rigorous mind had always been intolerant of small talk, now waited for its arrival, an elixir against his dark and monotonous days.

My father's first episode of depression (he always hated what he called the "wimpiness" of that word), in the fall of 1985, had driven him almost to suicide. Away at college at the time, I had received reports from my mother and siblings on Daddy's "blues," his difficulty sleeping, his mystifying and recurrent anxiety attacks. He spent the entire Thanksgiving weekend in bed, his face a rictus of despair. But my mother, who, at eighteen, had been shielded from the news of her father's death until she finished her exams, did her best to downplay the situation. Both for our sake and for her own, she tried to maintain some degree of domestic normalcy. And so I was unaware of the magnitude of Daddy's troubles until mid-December, when my mother admitted him, with his consent, to the psychiatric unit at Yale New Haven Hospital. We spent Christmas Day in his room, acting awkwardly cheerful and watching a video of old home movies that my sister Susanna had put together. I remember how disturbing I found that initial visit, how unnerved I was the first time a nurse checked my bag for sharp objects before drawing out her keys to unlock the ward door. The grim reality on the other side eventually lost its ability to shock me.

During his slide toward hospitalization, Daddy's lifelong hypochondria, and a tendency toward megalomania, bent through an unforgiving prism. His head was filled with frightful Technicolor visions. Convinced that he was dying, he enlisted Mum to keep a twenty-four-hour vigil at his side. He pestered her with negative thoughts about his life's work, insistent that his ignominious end would eclipse his literary legacy. For years, he had pushed her away, but now he wouldn't let her out of his sight. He followed her to the grocery store, the post office, from their bedroom to the kitchen. If she did manage to sneak away for an hour, a passing rain shower could throw him into a panic that she and her car were wrapped around a tree.

Certainly my independent mother was frustrated. But her abiding love for Daddy, as always, came before her own needs. She transformed herself, without complaint, from my father's lover, friend, muse, and combatant to his nursemaid, cheerleader, chauffeur, and medical advocate. Her optimism, and her belief in the power of options—a different drug, a different doctor, the right combination of friends for dinner—bordered on the ridiculous. But she was the most powerful reason that he survived.

No one will ever chronicle this chapter in my father's life better than he did. His account, "Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness," in some ways changed the arc of his career. Having written for forty years on the subject of man's inhumanity to man, he was now the preëminent portraitist of the self-inflicted savagery that was his particular type of mental illness. That he "came forth"—as he quoted Dante—"and once again beheld the stars" offered tremendous hope to other sufferers and their families. He became the public face of unipolar depression, a role that he willingly, sympathetically inhabited. What he could not possibly have done was foresee a relapse. Nor could he have synthesized, yet, the radical ways in which he had been altered.

The sorrow, fear, and guilt that Daddy had held at bay for half a century were never truly banished again. They humbled him, exposing a vulnerable, needy penitent who was sometimes, frankly, hard to bear. At the height of his sickness, Daddy raved about all his misdeeds, rued his rotten and irremediable heart. He begged us all to go away, to leave him in his solitary shame. "You have to divorce me," he urged my mother, worried that his medical care would leave the family bankrupt. He wanted, he said, to die alone, in the manner he deserved. At the same time, he made uncharacteristic declarations of love for each of us and gratitude for our forbearance. Watching one's father go mad is both scary and dislocating. But Daddy's self-recrimination also neutralized some of my strongest feelings about

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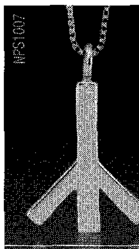
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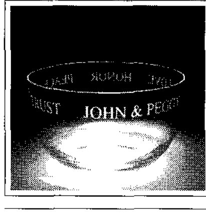
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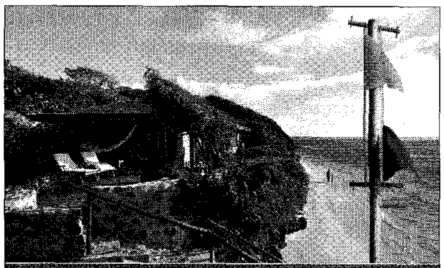

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him. The simmering adolescent anger cooled, giving way to a kind of bewildered pity. I think it's safe to say that we all felt this way to varying degrees; it's hard, after all, to be pissed off at a guy who is suffering so terribly, and who hates himself so much.

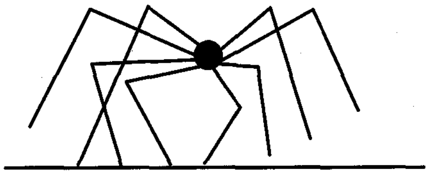
After two months in the hospital, Daddy got a reprieve, when he responded, at last, to treatment. For almost fifteen years, his life took on a passing semblance of the one he once enjoyed. He wrote and spoke frequently on the subject of mental illness, and he published a short-story collection, "A Tidewater Morning," in which he explored his mother's cancer and its effect on him. He and Mum drew closer together. Never again was he the raging brute of my childhood. But neither was he the sure-footed literary lion. Writing, which had always been hard for him, became a nearly impossible task, perhaps because he could no longer compartmentalize the emotions that his work inspired. For most of my adult life, Daddy was a reasonably kind and gentle man, but he was also a haunted, and hunted, one. When, near his seventy-fifth birthday, depression struck again, it found an older, softer, and much less defensible target.

The last six years of my father's life were an ongoing disaster. Mass General, New York-Presbyterian, N.Y.U. The Martha's Vineyard Hospital, the New Milford Hospital, Windemere, and Bethel. Zoloft, Cymbalta, Sinemet. Klonopin, Effexor, and Nardil. ECTs, MRIs, radiation therapy. Feeding tubes, throat-suction devices, twenty-four-hour nurses. It was a cavalcade of emergency rooms and rehab centers, treatments and second opinions, drug-induced mania alternating with the horrific, grinding boredom of sitting, paralyzed, while life drained away from him. His hypersensitive system was intolerant of any drug protocol; every "possible side effect" tried out its routine on him. He was variously psychotic, catatonic, nauseated, and ravenous; his throat hurt, his stomach burned, he couldn't pee, and he couldn't read. He developed parkinsonian symptoms, so that his limbs stiffened and his speech grew faint. Each hospital stay further weakened his body, while chronic anhedonia left him unable to rally when he was released. Mum turned her life over to finding a cure, and was the last of us to accept that, this time, there would not be one. In the end, a panoply of opportunistic illnesses invaded my father's body. Bed sores, throat cancer, recurrent pneumonia (his ultimate "cause of death") prompted by the aspiration of everything that went into his mouth.

Talking to my father got harder and harder during these years. The topics on which one could engage him—the latest books, movies, or other current affairs—went the way of his deteriorating focus. I often dreaded visiting him, the awkwardness exposing not only the gulf that Daddy's affliction created between him and the rest of the world but the one that had always existed between us. Even the easiest subjects were studded with unseen mines.

I had come to writing relatively late, not settling into it as a profession until my late twenties. And though he was initially apprehensive (I'd been a struggling actress after college), my father eventually became a vocal supporter and enthusiastic reader. On one of those house-hunting visits, mostly to pass the time, I told him the plot of my novel-in-progress. "A great novel must have a great theme," he said. "It sounds like you have one." I promised to let him read what I had so far, but I knew better than to ask the same of him. My father sat in his favorite yellow chair, writing hand atrophied by some mystery plague, mind afield in a pharmaceutical fog. Into the silence around us crept the unspoken—his own unfinished manuscript on the desk upstairs.

I sometimes wondered if my father knew that I'd never read "Sophie's Choice." The huge book party, at the River Café (my first trip to Brooklyn), had been a teen-age thrill. But it was the release of the film, three years later, and the hullabaloo surrounding its success, that beguiled me. I saw the movie a dozen times. My first and most lasting impression of the Brooklyn Bridge



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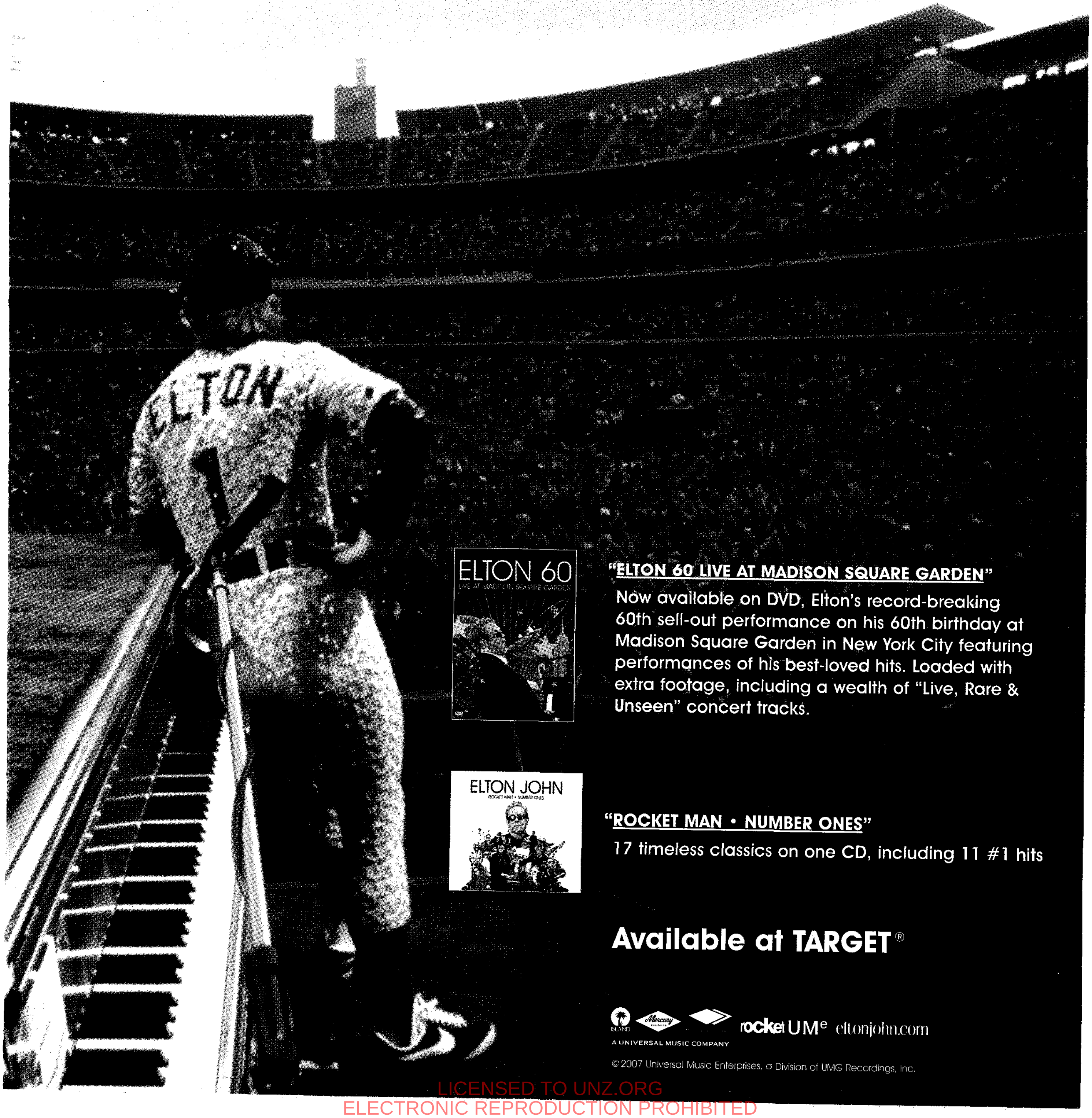
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was the scene of Kevin Kline, as Nathan, leaning out from the cables, champagne glass in hand. It is the culmination of a celebratory night prompted by Nathan's exuberant critical reaction to Stingo's early manuscript pages. The camera pans back to reveal the sparkling river and the Manhattan skyline. "To Stingo!" Nathan shouts. As the music swelled, so did my heart, brimming at last with filial pride.

In my twenties, I read a lot of my father's other work, but, after so much cinematic exposure to the story of "Sophie's Choice," I never felt like picking up the book when I was old enough to read it. Then, after a while, I felt a little too old. How could I consider myself a serious writer and not, already in my late thirties, have read "Sophie's Choice"? How could I be Bill Styron's daughter? How could I live in Brooklyn?

My father had visited only twice since our move from Manhattan. Once, days after the birth of our son, he came to Bergen Street and held our baby, his namesake. He admired our tree-lined street and told me that he had lived nearby, next to a place I'd never heard of, called the Parade Ground. By the time he came again, to Vinegar Hill, for our son's second birthday, he was well into his unravelling and the visit was a fiasco. Even with assistance, he nearly fell backward coming up the stairs, and he spent the party in a corner of the sofa, his shock and embarrassment rendering him mute. As Ed essentially carried him downstairs at the end of the night, my mother consoled my father.

"Don't worry, sweetheart," she said. "You never have to come here again."

By April of 2005, Daddy was hospitalized again, this time at N.Y.U.'s Rusk Institute, at least providing an easy commute for Mum when I gave birth to my daughter in the maternity ward, next door.

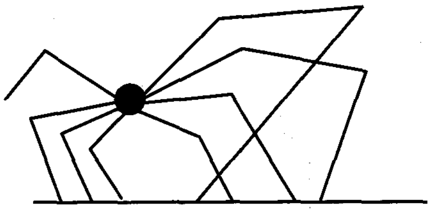
The lone dogwood on our block bloomed. It appeared that spring had come, even to this gritty corner of the borough. And with the freeze went the last of my resolve for country living. The months we'd spent looking in Connecticut had given me a vicarious experience powerful enough to clarify my priorities. Lots of people want to move back home. It just turns out I'm not one of them.

Between evening feedings of our newborn, I began to read "Sophie's Choice." My excuses for not finishing it before were fair enough. But now I had an almost biological urge to close this gap in my knowledge. My father was dying and I wanted, somehow, to know him better.

Daddy's future and those of his doomed characters became, for me, inextricably linked. The same incipient sorrow that follows Stingo, Sophie, and Nathan on their tragic summer odyssey dogged my reading. As a writer, I wondered at how my father kept giving the narrative over so seamlessly to his heroine. As a new mother, I felt that my heart might shatter during the book's climax. And as a daughter I wept for little Eva. "She still had her *miś*"—her Teddy bear—"and her flute," Sophie, says, describing for Stingo her final image of the little girl, being dragged away by the S.S.

Sitting in bed at night, Flatbush Avenue behind me, I imagined my father in the fullness of youth. Not Stingo but Daddy, so vivid and living so close that I felt I could turn around and touch him back through the years. Callow, awkward, ambitious, and (yes) horny, his extraordinary life still before him. All his stories yet untold. Each place he named—Flatbush, Gage & Tollner, Williamsburg, the Church Avenue B.M.T. station—led me along the map of our common ground. The St. George Hotel was, I suddenly realized, home to my gym. The house on Pierrepont Street where Stingo makes his hilarious, bungling advances toward Leslie Lapidus had to be right around the corner from our grocery store. In the end, my father gave me a Brooklyn that felt that much more like home.

On a crisp day last spring, six months after my father's death, I walked across Prospect Park in search of my father's Brooklyn home. It's no more than a twenty-minute stroll from the house that we finally bought in Park Slope to Caton Avenue and the baseball diamonds of the Parade Ground. In fact, when the leaves drop from the sycamores that line our street I can see his old neighborhood from our roof. I left the house with his address, which I'd found on a letter that he had written to my grandfather, and a downloaded map of what is now called Prospect Park South.

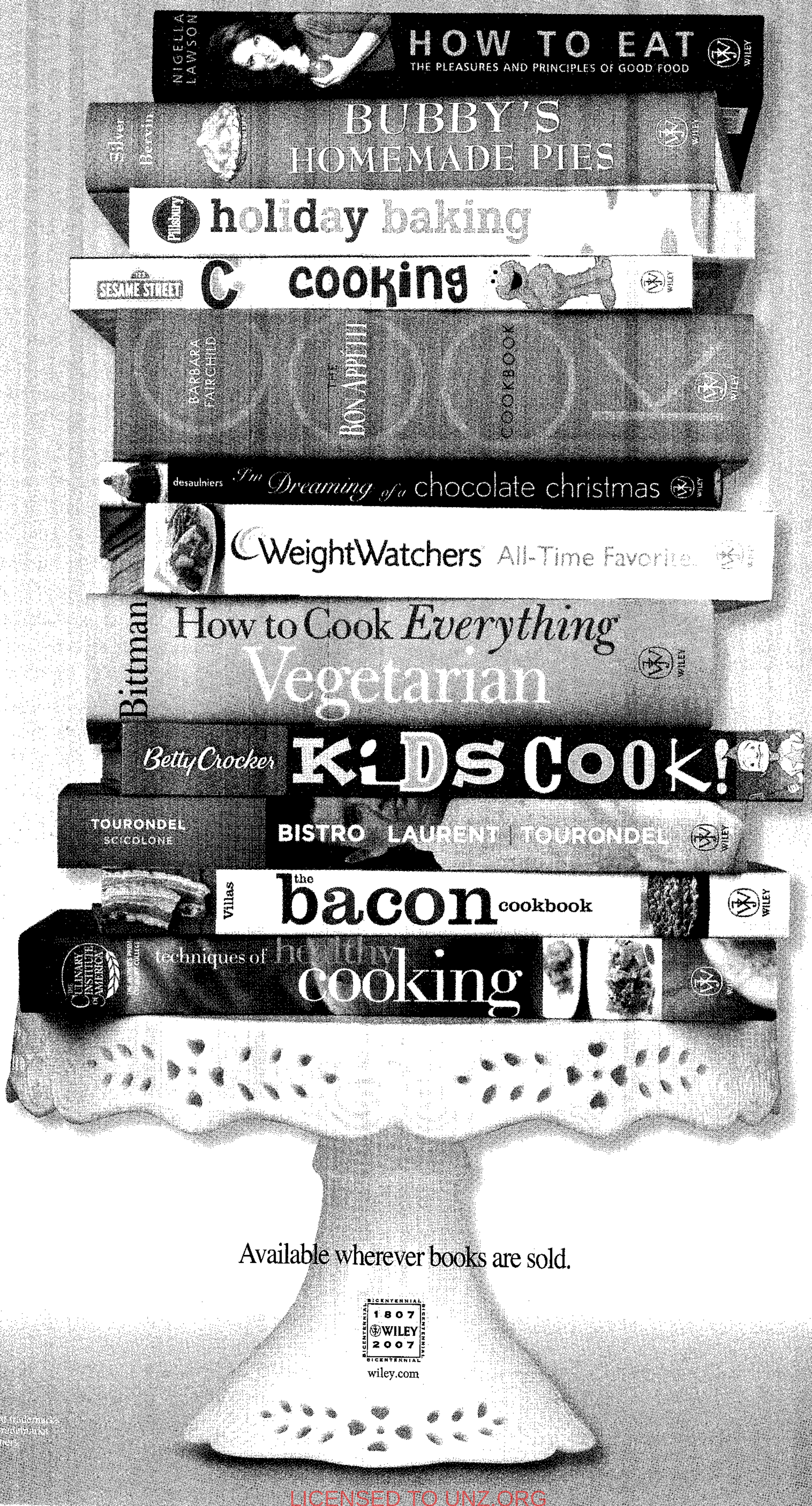


Sophie had come to him in a dream, Daddy always said. Not much older than I am now, he had woken up in Connecticut and been unable to shake the image of a woman he once knew. She'd lived above him in Flatbush, in the boarding house he immortalized as Yetta Zimmerman's Pink Palace. She was a Holocaust survivor, as evidenced by her wrist tattoo, Polish and beautiful, but more than that he didn't know. Her boyfriend was American, but undistinguished. After the book came out, I used to answer the phone at home so my father wouldn't have to. More than once, women with heavy accents explained the nature of their call in tearful and dramatic tones. "Daddy," my notes would read, "a lady called. I can't spell her name. She says she's Sophie." And a number somewhere in Michigan, or New Jersey.

I never told my father that I read the book, or about the man I discovered in the pages of "Sophie's Choice." Not only the one who, like Stingo, "wanted beyond hope or dreaming to be a writer" but the man who became one. I wanted to tell him what I knew, but I didn't. As I walked through the park, I thought about how you always believe that there will be more time. You always think that you'll find the courage, tomorrow, to speak the truth.

Daddy's house, the Pink Palace, is gone. In its place squats a beige concrete box, where a Dr. Duddempudi no doubt conducts serious business despite her Seussian name. Gone, too, are Daddy's neighbors, the Kingdom of the Jews renationalized by more recent colonizers. A Jamaican flag flutters from a car antenna, and soccer rules the fields over which Sandy Koufax once waved his scepter. The "pickle-fragrant air" is redolent of truck exhaust. The food is more fast than kosher. But as I returned to the park, among the cattails that line Prospect Lake, past Concert Grove and the statue of Daddy's beloved Mozart, I held fast for a moment to what remained. My father's story, transiting mine, on the green walk home. ♦

Gifts in good taste.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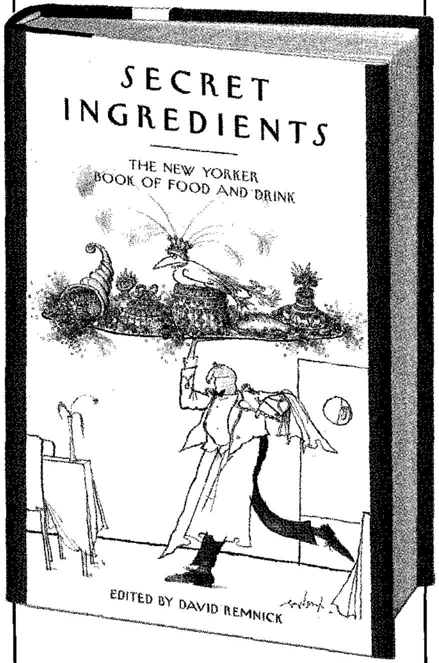

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MONKEY DO

BY YONI BRENNER

> In a paper in Psychological Science, researchers at Yale report finding the first evidence of cognitive dissonance in monkeys.
> —*The Times.*

EXPERIMENT 1: BANANAS

Method: A monkey observed to have a particularly strong penchant for bananas is given a choice—he can continue his standard ration of one banana per day or he can give up bananas in exchange for an unlimited supply of a revolutionary product called New Banana. Unable to resist the lure of this perpetual bounty, the monkey throws caution to the wind and eschews his regular banana in favor of New Banana, which, unbeknownst to the monkey, is not actually a banana but a cake of hard-packed baking soda inside a banana peel.

Results: Initially, the monkey is revolted by New Banana and enters a prolonged period of depression, eying his fellow-monkeys and their tasty bananas with a doleful expression. But, after a few months, the monkey gets used to New Banana, and by the end of the year he has become a vigorous proselyte, extolling the energetic, spiritual, and colonic properties of New Banana, while disparaging the musty tropical reek of traditional bananas. After a year, the monkey refuses to so much as touch a regular banana, and repeatedly proclaims that switching to New Banana was the best decision he ever made.

EXPERIMENT 2: APARTMENT SEARCH

Method: Having lived in a research laboratory for ten years, a monkey is encouraged to get his own place, in midtown or maybe the East Village. A research assistant, posing as a broker, shows the monkey a cramped, overpriced studio off Second Avenue. The monkey balks—after all, he's a grown monkey; doesn't he deserve a little space? The monkey dismisses the research assistant and starts obsessively scanning the rental listings on Craigslist, determined to find an affordable one-bedroom with no fee.

Results: After responding to hundreds of listings and visiting more than twenty apartments—all of which are either dilapidated, vermin-infested, meth-lab-adjacent, or some combination of the three—the search begins to wear on the monkey, and he starts questioning why he was so fixated on getting a one-bedroom. After all, he's a single monkey, and doesn't he spend all his time at work anyway? Besides, with some creative light-palate decorating and a new flat-screen TV, a studio could look quite spacious. After a few days, this logic sinks in and the monkey not only signs a two-year lease for the Second Avenue place but recommends the "broker" to several other monkeys in the lab. Two months later, the monkey is tragically killed when he rolls out of his bed and directly into the trash compactor.

EXPERIMENT 3: JUDAISM

Method: An avowedly secular, anti-religious monkey is introduced to a gorgeous female research assistant with a sarcastic edge that some would call harsh but he finds wholly endearing. Early in the relationship, the research assistant informs the monkey that, as much as she loves him, she cannot marry him unless he converts to Judaism. Undaunted, the monkey seeks out a rabbi and thrusts himself into the arduous, several-year process of Orthodox conversion. Then, fifteen months into conversion classes, the research assistant suddenly dumps the monkey, explaining that he has "changed."

Results: Heartbroken, the monkey withdraws from everything that reminds him of the research assistant, denouncing religion and claiming that he never really liked Malaysian Expressionist cinema. But, in a few weeks, the monkey is back with his rabbi, having determined that his spiritual journey was independent of the relationship and that he owes it to himself to see it through. Following his conversion, the monkey throws himself into Jewish life—running for treasurer at a small progressive temple in New Rochelle and contributing an online column to the magazine *Hadassah*—before falling madly in love with an Episcopalian underwear model he met during intermission at the Israel Philharmonic.

EXPERIMENT 4: IRAQ

Method: A right-leaning monkey is invited to be a guest on what he believes is a Sunday-morning news program but is in fact a panel of research assistants sitting around a card table in pancake makeup. The panel proceeds to grill the monkey on the catastrophic intelligence failures and phantom W.M.D.s that led to the invasion of Iraq, asking how he can justify his continued support of such a costly and destructive war launched under false pretenses.

Results: Unfazed, the monkey deftly reframes the debate, asserting that the war was never about W.M.D.s but about transforming the political dynamic of the region, which is an ongoing historical process and thus immune to the partisan slings of shortsighted pundits. So polished is the monkey's reasoning that he is recruited by the Heritage Foundation and soon becomes a fixture on the real Sunday-morning circuit, steadfastly denying the relevance of W.M.D.s. All seems to be going well until he appears on ABC's "This Week" and is ambushed with a 2003 tape of himself at a V.F.W. post saying, "This war is about W.M.D.s, pure and simple." After a prolonged silence, the monkey stammers something about "out of context," then leaps at George Stephanopoulos's face, inflicting several small bite wounds. Six months later, the monkey's confirmation as Ambassador to the United Nations is effectively sunk following a bizarre incident in which he is accused of throwing his feces at Barbara Boxer (although the monkey insists that it was the other way around). ♦

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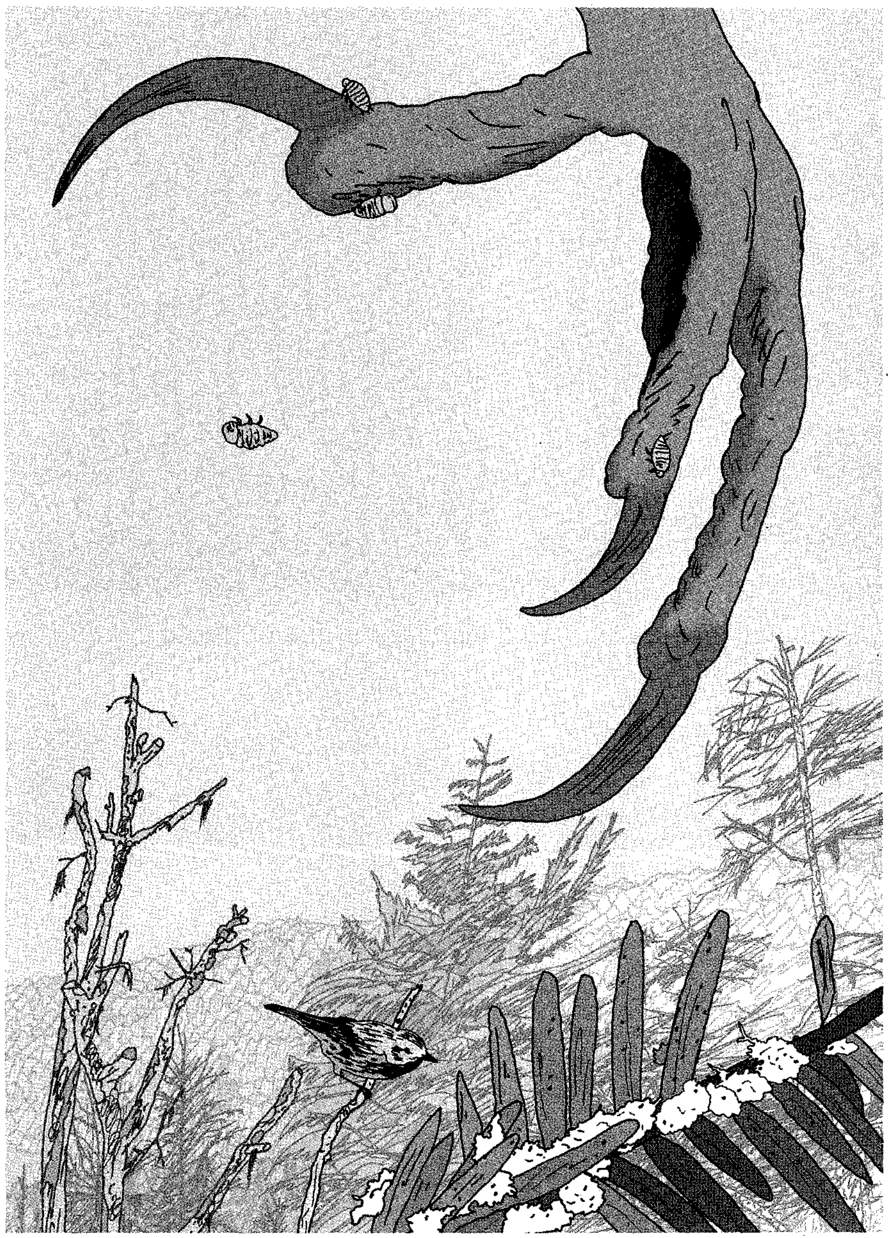
LETTER FROM NORTH CAROLINA

A DEATH IN THE FOREST

Can the trees of the Great Smoky Mountains be saved?

BY RICHARD PRESTON



Foresters knew that the adelgids would spread, but they were surprised at how fast.

In 1911, a woman named Sallie Dooley established a Japanese garden at Maymont, her estate in Richmond, Virginia. She planted bamboo, built a gazebo and a waterfall, and, according to her husband, James Dooley, a financier, "purchased the most costly evergreens from all parts of the world." She died in 1925, and Maymont was left to the city of Richmond. It became a park, and the Japanese garden went untended. In 1951, an entomologist with the Virginia Department of Agriculture discovered a species of Asian insect known as the hemlock woolly adelgid infesting an eastern hemlock—a tree native to North America—on property near Maymont Park. The hemlock woolly adelgid is a tiny brown bug similar to an aphid; the body of an adult is covered with a protective white fluff that makes it look like a fleck of cotton. It is a parasite, and it feeds on several species of hemlock and spruce trees in Asia. This was its first known appearance in eastern North America. The suspicion was that it had come with Sallie Dooley's imported evergreens, though no one could be sure. Experts considered it a curiosity.

After hatching from an egg, the woolly adelgid goes through a crawler stage, when it moves around. The crawler is almost invisible to the naked eye. It can drift in the air from tree to tree, and it can cling to the legs and feathers of migrating birds. The insect eventually settles down among the needles of a host tree. It inserts a bundle of mouthparts at the base of a needle, and spends the rest of its life—a few months—sucking nutrients out of the tree. The woolly adelgid goes through two generations a year, and each female lays between a hundred and three hundred eggs. A female can lay eggs without being fertilized by a male. The offspring are clones of their mother—genetically identical to her. As it has turned out, the population of woolly adelgids in North America seems to consist entirely of female clones. Males still hatch occasionally, but they breed and live in spruce trees, and American spruces lack nutrients that they need, so they die—a further indication that the adelgids are transplants. It hardly matters: a single female clone can generate as many as ninety thousand copies of herself in a year.

In Asia, the host trees have developed resistance to the woolly adelgid; in eastern North America, though, the hemlocks have virtually no resistance, and the insects have no natural predators. When millions of woolly adelgids cover the branches of an eastern hemlock, it turns a dirty whitish color, as if it had been flocked with artificial snow. Many of its needles fall off. The tree puts out a new crop of needles the following spring, but the crawlers attach themselves to the new needles, the tree goes into shock, and the needles fall off again. The cycle of shock and defoliation continues until the tree dies, usually in two to six years.

There weren't many eastern hemlocks in Richmond; the few that were there

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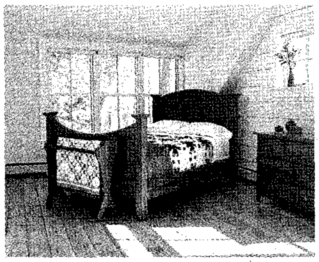

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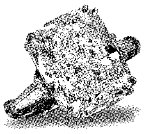

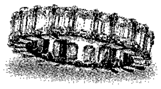

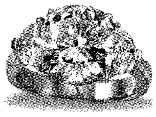

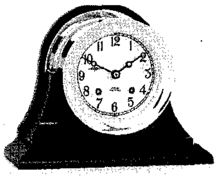

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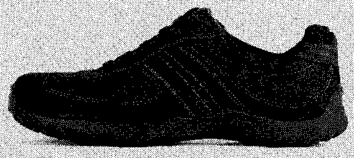

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were planted in people's yards, scattered through the city. Many of them eventually died, but gardeners found that if they sprayed an infested hemlock once a year with pesticides or an oil spray the adelgids would be suppressed. Tim Tigner, an entomologist who worked at the Virginia Department of Forestry, told me recently that, for most of the nineteen-eighties, "we advised people not to worry about them. They didn't seem to be doing anything."

In the late eighties, Tigner learned that the insect had got into a stand of old hemlocks on the York River, forty miles east of the city, and he went to have a look. He got a shock: ninety per cent of the hemlocks were dead. The woolly adelgids had turned the grove into a sun-bleached ruin.

Botanists sometimes refer to the eastern hemlock—its species name is *Tsuga canadensis*—as the redwood of the East. It is a tall, long-lived conifer with soft, flat needles and feathery foliage, and occurs naturally in the Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to New Brunswick, with a range that runs westward through Michigan into Wisconsin. The tallest existing eastern hemlocks are somewhat more than a hundred and seventy feet high, and the largest (measured by volume of wood) can be more than six feet in diameter. The oldest living specimens may be more than six hundred years old.

Hemlocks do especially well in the temperate rain forest found in the southern Appalachian Mountains, where they grow on mountain slopes and form dense stands in upland valleys called coves. Hemlocks create deep shade and cover the ground with beds of needles, altering the temperature, moisture, and chemistry of the soil around them, and creating a distinctive habitat for certain animals and plants. Some ecologists believe that those coves contain—or, until recently, contained—the last examples of primeval rain forest in eastern North America. Only small fragments of old-growth forests remain in the East. Many of them are in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which, straddling Tennessee and North Carolina, covers half a million acres; about a fifth of the park has apparently never been logged. Loggers haven't bothered to go into many coves to cut hemlocks, because the tree is practically worthless for lumber: the wood is full of knots, and often fractures when the tree falls.

In 1988, around the time Tigner saw the woolly adelgid by the York River, it was discovered in Shenandoah National Park, in northern Virginia. It seems to have got there when crawlers clung to the legs and feathers of migrating birds that visit or nest in hemlock trees—the black-throated green warbler, the solitary vireo. In Shenandoah, the insect multiplied with explosive speed. By 1992, most of the hemlocks in the park were infested, and three years later the majority of them were dead. Today, stands of eastern hemlock have essentially disappeared from Shenandoah National Park.

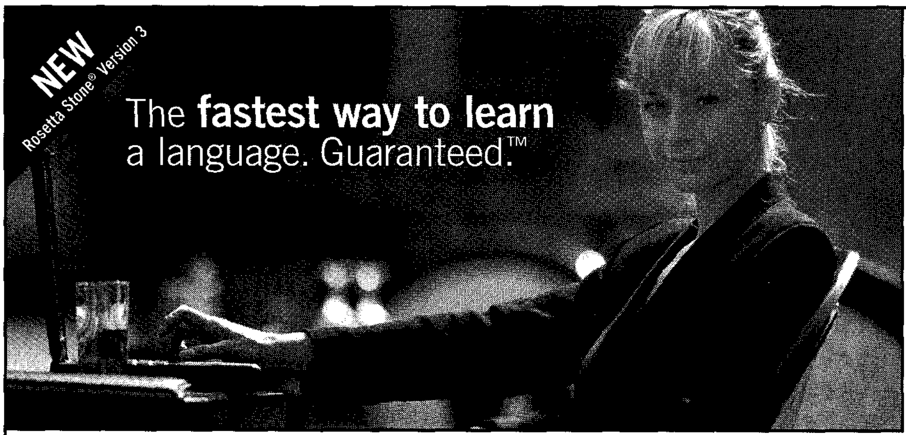
The crawlers spread rapidly northward. They were moving southward only slowly, though, possibly because there were few crawlers around in the autumn when birds flew south. By 1998, many of the hemlock groves in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, which lies between Pennsylvania and New Jersey, were infested and had begun to die. From eastern Pennsylvania to Connecticut, hemlocks were being turned into skeletons. The insect got to Massachusetts. Stands of old hemlock there were defoliated. However, a spell of intensely cold weather during the winter of 1996, when temperatures in parts of the Northeast fell to as low as twenty degrees below zero, seemed to kill many adelgids. "The hemlocks looked O.K. after that cold winter," James Åkerson, an ecologist with Shenandoah National Park, said. "It may have given us a false sense of hope."

Invasive species of microbes, plants, and animals are changing ecosystems in a biological upheaval that may affect almost everything that lives. The cause of the upheaval is the human species. Life on the planet is being homogenized by the expanding human population and the frequent and rapid movement of people and goods, which carry invasive organisms with them. These invasives often flourish in their new ecosystems because, like the woolly adelgid, they have escaped their predators. A fungal disease called chestnut blight, which colonizes chestnut trees in Asia, first appeared in North America in 1904. Spread by wind, rain, and birds, it killed almost every American chestnut tree. Chestnuts had once saturated vast stretches of forest in the Appalachians. Since the nineteen-thirties, the American elm has virtually disappeared, pushed into oblivion by an invasive Asian fungus spread by an invading beetle from Europe. A fungal disease of unknown origin has killed off the vast majority of the wild flowering dogwoods in North America. Another disease, sudden oak death, has killed hundreds of thousands of oaks in California and may get into Eastern oaks. A European insect, carrying a European fungus, has lately caused a mass dying of the American beech tree. An Asian beetle called the emerald ash borer arrived in Michigan in 2001 in packing wood from China. It is devastating to a number of species of American ash trees. Despite strong efforts to control it, the emerald ash borer keeps appearing in different places, and it seems capable of not only wiping out the ash but threatening the classic major-league baseball bat (which is commonly made of ash). Another invader, the Asian long-horned beetle, had its North American début in Brooklyn, where it showed up in a park near warehouses that held large amounts of packing wood from China. The Asian long-horned beetle has infested tens of thousands of trees in New Jersey and Long Island, and it has showed up in Sacramento. It could take out the sugar maple.

When a parasite moves to a new habitat, it can find new hosts, through a process called the trans-species jump. Often, the new host has no resistance; it and the parasite haven't had time to adjust to each other through natural selection (it is frequently not in the best interest of a parasite to kill its host quickly). One example is the human immunodeficiency virus. H.I.V. appears to have once lived in chimpanzees, though it didn't make them sick. In Africa, it made trans-species jumps, and amplified itself in its new hosts.

Global climate change has become entangled with the problem of invasive species. A warmer climate could allow some invaders to spread farther, while causing native organisms to go extinct in their traditional habitats, and making room for invaders. The earth's biosphere could be thought of as a sort of palace. The continents are rooms in the palace; islands are smaller rooms. Each room has its own décor and unique inhabitants; many of the rooms have been sealed off for millions of years. The doors in the palace have been flung open, and the walls are coming down.

Global climate change may be helping the adelgids spread both north and south. Winters in the north are becoming steadily warmer, and the insects are not being hit as often with deep cold. Summers in the southern Appalachians have lately become drier and hotter, and drought stress makes infested hemlocks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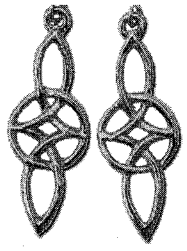

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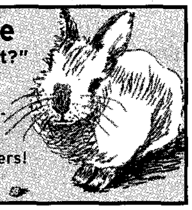

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far more susceptible to dying. Climate change may also mean that the adelgids are more active when birds fly south. Recently, the woolly adelgid has turned up in Ohio, Michigan, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine—approaching the northern limits of the hemlock range. Wherever it goes, it seems to get into every hemlock. It kills saplings before they can produce seeds, and so it keeps the species from reproducing. Many experts have concluded that the insect could kill nearly all the eastern hemlocks, and the species could essentially disappear from the wild. The term that biologists use for this is "functional extinction."

On December 3, 2001, an arborist named Will Blozan discovered woolly adelgids on the branches of a wild hemlock in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness, on the Blue Ridge in South Carolina, near the extreme southern end of the hemlock range. No one had expected to see the insect this far south, so soon. "It was a spear through the heart," Blozan told me. He phoned Rusty Rhea, an entomologist and the forest-health specialist for the Forest Service in Asheville, North Carolina. Rhea was surprised. He sent out a bulletin to all rangers in the area warning them to look for adelgids. Within two weeks, Rhea was getting reports. The woolly adelgid had gone all over the mountains.

Will Blozan is the co-owner of a tree-care company called Appalachian Arborists, based in Asheville. He is also the president of the Eastern Native Tree Society, a small organization dedicated to discovering giant trees in the East. Since 1993, he had been spending his spare time exploring patches of old-growth forest in the Appalachians from New Hampshire to Georgia. In the Great Smokies in summer, the heat can be Amazonian; the land can slope sixty degrees, and in many places the undergrowth consists of a mesh of rhododendrons. "'Rhodo wrestling' may be the appropriate term for movement in the Smokies," Blozan said. When he found a big tree, he would get an estimate of its height using a laser device. Later, he would climb to the top and send a measuring tape down along the trunk—this is the only way to get the height of a tree to the nearest inch.

Blozan discovered that the upland coves of the Cataloochee Valley, a rumpled drainage that lies at the southeastern tip of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, have the highest average tree height—more than a hundred and sixty feet—of any watershed in eastern North America. The valley contains more than eighty per cent of the world's tallest eastern hemlocks. It also contains the world's largest yellow poplar and four of the world's tallest white pines. In effect, the Cataloochee Valley is the Notre Dame cathedral of the eastern forests.

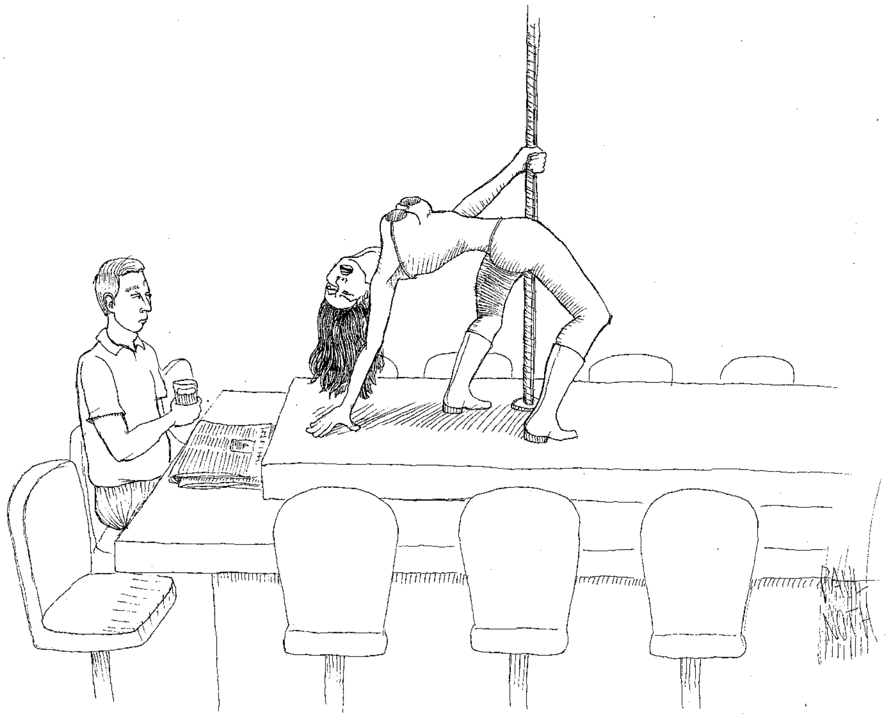
By the summer of 2002, the woolly adelgid had been found in the Cataloochee. Kristine Johnson, the park's forester, is a slender woman in her fifties, with a calm manner. "We currently have about a thousand sites in the park where exotic plants have got in, and we're dealing with ninety different species of invading organisms," she said to me recently—everything from Japanese stiltgrass to princess tree and fire ants. "We knew that sooner or later we would have the woolly adelgid. We were still surprised by how quickly it got here."

Oil spray—the treatment that had helped smaller trees in urban yards—wouldn't work in wilderness areas, where hundreds of thousands of large hemlocks would need to be drenched every year. There were two other promising options, though. Scientists at the University of Tennessee—funded in part by a private group, Friends of the Smokies—started a small lab for breeding a kind of lady beetle native to Japan that eats woolly adelgids. It was hoped that the beetles, released into the wild, would eventually cut down on the insects. Rusty Rhea, of the Forest Service, pushed the beetle strategy forward, and researchers began releasing the beetles. The bugs initially cost about two and a half dollars each; a handful cost hundreds of dollars. When they were released at test sites, they had no measurable effect. Lately, though, a test in Banner Elk, North Carolina, in which different species of adelgid-eating beetles were released over several years, has had promising results—one type of beetle, from the Pacific Northwest, has got established at the site and is eating adelgids, and the hemlocks there are looking better. Questions remain about whether and how quickly such results can be achieved on a larger scale—if enough beetles can be bred and released and can multiply fast enough to save the hemlock forests that are dying or under immediate threat. The beetles may work in the long run, but by then it may be too late for most hemlocks.

There is also an insecticide treatment, a chemical called Imidacloprid, which is made by Bayer. Imidacloprid normally is mixed with water and injected into the soil around the root system of a hemlock. The chemical slowly moves into the foliage. When the adelgids suck it into their bodies, they die. Imidacloprid is an artificial kind of nicotine. (Tobacco plants produce nicotine as a natural insecticide.) The injections are labor-intensive, but at the moment there is no good alternative: if Imidacloprid was sprayed from the air, it would wipe out beneficial insects and wouldn't kill many adelgids—the insect's woolly coat sheds water. Imidacloprid has some advantages: it doesn't migrate much through soil, and it degrades in sunlight quickly. However, it is a toxic compound that could kill many grubs in the soil near the tree and insects feeding on it. It does not seem to affect vertebrates—frogs, salamanders, birds. "I wouldn't want to see chemical treatment be the only way to save hemlocks, but nothing else is ready right now," Blozan said. "Either you get some invertebrate kill around the treatment site or you get an ecosystem collapse—that's the choice."

As soon as adelgids were found in the park, the Forest Service and Bayer began seeking Environmental Protection Agency permission to use the chemical in wild forests (it was approved for ornamental and landscape settings). The park treated ten old-growth hemlocks, as a test. Will Blozan's company, Appalachian Arborists, was hired to climb the trees and take samples of the foliage, to see how the chemical was moving in the tree. It can take a year or two for the benefits to become noticeable; some trees die anyway. "After treatment, the hemlock can look completely dead, but sometimes it will come back, and in three years it'll be vigorous," Blozan said. The ones that live need to be re-treated every few years. The hemlocks would be like AIDS patients: they would never be free of the disease, though some could survive indefinitely on drugs. "What you get is a forest on life support," Blozan said. "But at least it can be kept alive while we hope for a cure."

Getting funding to fight the insect in the Great Smoky Mountains park was a byzantine process. The National Park Service, Kristine Johnson's employer, runs the park, but the Forest Service has responsibility for controlling pests in fed-



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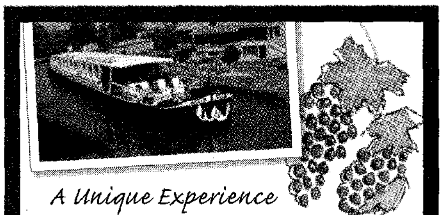

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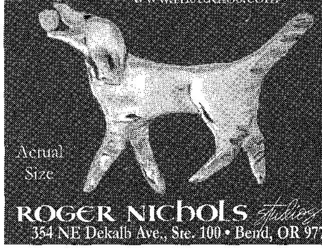

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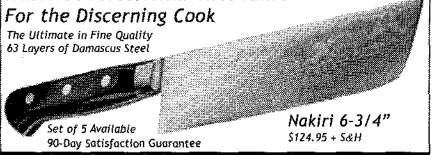

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eral forests, including the national parks. The Forest Service is in the Department of Agriculture, while the National Park Service is in the Department of the Interior. Funding for insect control competes with other Forest Service needs, such as fighting forest fires. And the Forest Service appears to concentrate its pest-control efforts on trees that have commercial value—it has spent more than a hundred million dollars trying to get the emerald ash borer contained—and hemlocks aren't marketable. In 2003, Kristine Johnson asked for and got about forty thousand dollars from the Forest Service to save the hemlocks in the Great Smoky Mountains park. Since then, the Forest Service has spent about fifteen million dollars on research into ways to control the adelgid, but it has spent far less to deploy the means now available. Direct Forest Service funding for the park to fight the bugs was only two hundred and fifty thousand dollars this year, with private donations increasing the total somewhat. ("The government is so damned slow," Blozan said. "Very little was done in the first two to three years.")

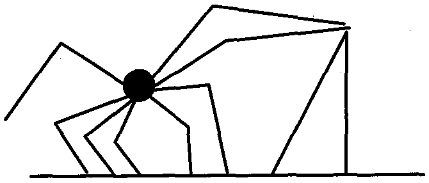
At the same time, Charles Taylor, then a Republican North Carolina congressman, who was the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee for the Department of the Interior, sought about six hundred million dollars to build a highway across Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It would probably have to include three bridges longer than the Brooklyn Bridge. Congress appropriated sixteen million dollars to develop plans for the road. None of the money could be used for controlling the insects.

In 2003 and 2004, Great Smoky Mountains Park employees treated hemlocks near public areas with Imidacloprid—trees in campgrounds and along roads—but not those deeper in the woods. The next year, the chemical was approved by the E.P.A. for use in forests, and Johnson and her colleagues designated special zones, called "hemlock conservation areas," where every hemlock would be treated. Appalachian Arborists won a contract, and put a crew of five to work, while another crew, of eight, went to work under a park forester, Tom Remaley. The conservation areas totalled two square miles; the park covers eight hundred square miles.

The biggest problem was carrying the water needed to mix with the chemical. The crews collected water from creeks in jugs, put the jugs in backpacks, and rhodo-wrestled their way up the mountainsides. A crew could treat between a hundred and four hundred hemlocks a day. At that pace, saving all the hemlocks in the national park was simply not possible. (Recently, Bayer has come up with a sort of pill containing Imidacloprid, which can be tucked among the roots of a hemlock. If it's effective, a crew might be able to treat thousands of trees a day.)

In no other park were officials making this kind of effort. "Many other parks are 'monitoring the decline,' as I would put it, while they're implementing control in high-public-use areas," Johnson said. "I could put a hundred people to work treating hemlocks." The woolly adelgid has not yet arrived in Cook Forest State Park, in northwestern Pennsylvania, which contains some of the richest old-growth eastern-hemlock forest. "These parks should have a plan ready, and at the first sign of adelgids they should execute their plan," James Åkerson, the Shenandoah ecologist, said. A few million dollars could probably save the remaining fragments of old-growth hemlock forests.

While the parks were waiting for Washington, Appalachian Arborists was hired to treat hemlocks on private property using the soil-injection method. The Reverend Billy Graham had thousands of sick hemlocks at his religious training center near Black Mountain, North Carolina; Blozan saved them. ("If you don't treat the tree, it will die, and then you'll have to spend two or three thousand dollars having it removed," he said.) He has also begun treating another species, the Carolina hemlock. It is a rare tree, occupying a narrow range, primarily in North and South Carolina, where it grows on dry, rocky outcrops. The Carolina hemlock looks like something out of a Chinese painting; it's a wind-blasted thing, with a mushroom-shaped top and limbs flowing into space. The State of South Carolina hired Blozan and his partners, and the men treated nearly every specimen in the state, five hundred and twenty in all, often while rappelling down a cliff. Most of the Carolina hemlocks across the border in North Carolina are on national-forest land, however, and haven't been treated.



One day this past August, I drove into the Cataloochee Valley with Will Blozan, in his Jeep, to see what had happened. We followed a dirt road that switchbacked down into the valley. It was a lush place, lined with meadows at the bottom, rising into ridges and coves blanketed with forest. The forest was streaked with gray areas, as if smoke filled it. We parked in a meadow and hiked into the woods along a creek called Rough Fork, crossing bridges made of single logs.

Big hemlocks, hundreds of years old, appeared. Sunlight seemed to blister its way through them. They were between fifty and eighty per cent defoliated, but the national-park crews had treated them, and many seemed to be alive, for now. "That one's looking better," Blozan said, squinting at a hemlock that looked half dead to me. He had a map of the forest in his mind, with individual trees in it. Around and above us extended ghosts, hemlocks that had been treated too late, and were dead or beyond saving. I couldn't see any adelgids; the parasites had died with their hosts. The air was filled with clouds of gray branches, like giant floating dust bunnies.

We stopped under a tall hemlock that glowed with green, a survivor in the cove. "This may be the healthiest hemlock in the park," Blozan said. It was known as Jim Branch No. 10, and it was a hundred and fifty feet tall. It was one of the ten experimental trees that the park had treated in 2003, and it had been treated again in 2005.

Blozan pulled the end of a climbing rope out of his pack and tied it to a cord he'd left strung in the tree. He put on a helmet and a tree-climbing harness, and began ascending along the rope, using rope ascenders. I followed him up. As you climb, you hang from branches with a system of ropes known as a motion lanyard, placing your feet lightly on the trunk and the stronger branches.

The tree was filled with a spicy tang,

the scent of green hemlock, and it was covered with living things. There were rare dark-brown lichens called cyanolichens, which fix nitrogen straight from the air. They fertilize the canopy of old forests. There were small hummocks of aerial moss, spiderwebs, insects associated with hemlock habitat. There were mites living in patches of moss and soil on the tree, many of which probably had never been classified by biologists. The hemlock forest consists in large part of an aerial region that remains a mystery, even as it is being swept into oblivion.

We stopped and rested at a hundred and thirty feet. Blozan was standing on a small limb. "When these trees die, the nearby streams turn brown," he said. "The water gets full of tannic acid. As long as I've been coming here, these streams were crystal clear. Now they look like they're coming out of a bog." Many insects and fish that live in hemlock streams, such as the stonefly and the brook trout, are threatened by sunlight and heat pouring into stream environments that were once shady and cool.

From the top of Jim Branch No. 10, we could see that the forest canopy was a ruin. The crowns of the dead trees were still encrusted with living material—a hemlock rain-forest canopy without the hemlock. It was a scaffold of lichens and other organisms. The trees that harbored them had died so recently and so suddenly that they were all carrying on, for the moment, as if nothing had happened.

When it became apparent that the eastern hemlock might nearly cease to exist, Blozan and his partners founded the Tsuga Search Project, an effort to identify and measure the world's tallest and largest eastern hemlocks before they were gone. To date, the partners have spent a hundred thousand dollars of their own money on it. Brian Hinshaw, one of the partners, told me, "We just want to try to understand what we once had in these hemlocks." In the Cataloochee Valley, Blozan walked into groves where he found what had been the world's tallest hemlocks. They were already dead, but he climbed the skeletons and measured them anyway. "The data are for someone someday," he said.

Three flagship species of migrating birds make their nests in hemlocks: the Blackburnian warbler, the black-throated green warbler, and the solitary vireo. In spring, they arrive in the Cataloochee before leaves come out on hardwoods; the evergreen hemlocks offer them cover, food, and a place to nest. No one knows what will happen to them next spring. Many other birds feed in hemlocks or nest in them, including the Acadian flycatcher, the Louisiana waterthrush, the winter wren, and the red-breasted nuthatch. The flying squirrel lives in hemlocks, and it feeds on fungi around their roots; recently, the flying squirrel seems to have gone into a decline. When an old hemlock falls, a world passes away. As for the Cataloochee Valley, most of the eastern hemlocks there are dead. ♦

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PROFILES

THE HUMBLING OF ELIOT SPITZER

The Governor's rocky rookie season.

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

New York State's notorious resistance to efficient governance owes a lot to geography. The state is vast, by Eastern standards, and its cities are far-flung. Seen one way, it is a rural state, with a right-angled corridor of denser settlement and industry which more or less follows the course of the Hudson River and the Erie Canal, from Manhattan to Lake Erie. Imagine a backward, rotated L, or a mirror image of a long-division tableau. In recent decades, Buffalo, at one end, has suffered a steep decline, while New York City, at the other, has flourished, as though good fortune had flowed down along the L, draining Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica along the way. The capital, Albany, is at the joint of the L, and seems to benefit—thrive would be too strong a word—whichever way the fortune flows, but it is still remote, in the way of capitals, like Brasília or Canberra, that were designed not to favor one constituency over another, except perhaps the one in residence. As such, Albany is the arbiter in New York's ceaseless upstate-downstate tug-of-war, which simultaneously pits rural Republicans against big-city liberals, and Rust Belt Democrats against supply-side suburbanites. The proliferation of cross-purposes and strange bedfellows makes for pernicious and complicated arbitrating. This is one (but far from the only) reason that Albany is home to what may be the most dysfunctional state government in the nation.

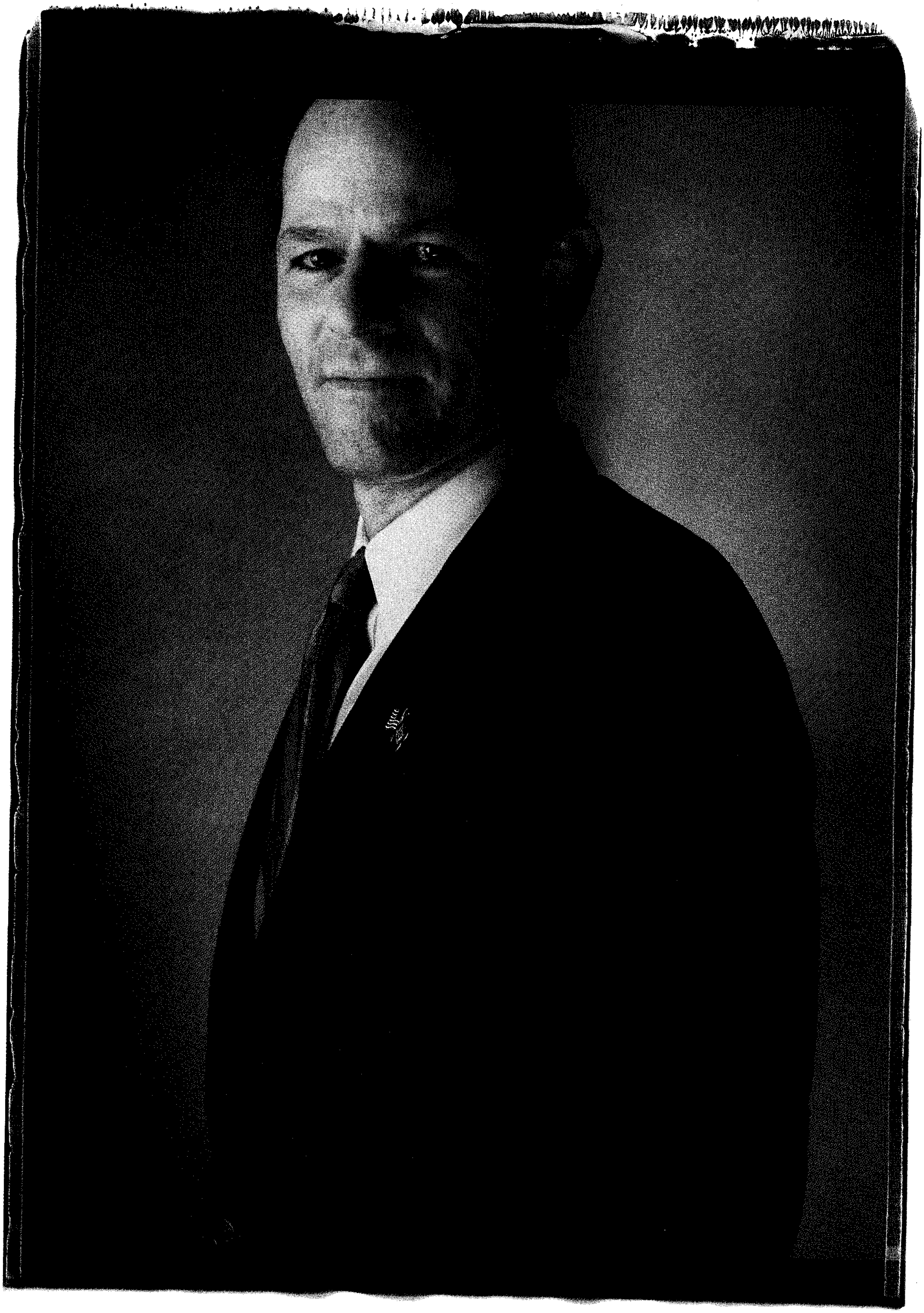
A year ago, Eliot Spitzer, the real-estate scion and crusading attorney general, won a lightly contested race for governor, against a Republican named John Faso, by promising to put an end to that dysfunction. Since then, Albany has in many ways become more dysfunctional than ever. The addition of an aggressive personality with an ambitious agenda has, perversely, gummed up the works. The acrimony between Spitzer and his enemies, born of scandal, policy disagreement, political desperation, tactical blundering, and personal animus, has all but stalled the workings of the government, or at least those which require the collaboration of the executive chamber and the Legislature.

The Governor's aides like to refer to "the Spitzer brand." Before his first year in office, Eliot Spitzer was a populist avenger, a media darling, a rising Democratic star, a progressive's Rudy Giuliani, a panacea-in-waiting, a front-runner in the first-Jewish-President race. Somehow, he's become an unpopular governor careering from mess to mess. Allegations that his office used the state police to smear Joseph Bruno for misusing state aircraft (an affair known as Troopergate), and a doomed proposal to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, have compromised the brand. His head shot has appeared repeatedly in the *Post* over the words "DIRTY TRICKS." Lou Dobbs spent a month ridiculing him on CNN. The throngs of Wall Streeters who despised him for his unyielding prosecutions when he was attorney general have been joined by scores of affronted political professionals, whose egos, customs, or survival instincts demand that they indulge their negative reactions to his way of doing things. Against Faso, he got sixty-nine per cent of the vote; a few weeks ago, a poll found that only twenty-five per cent would vote for him if an election were held today. The common perception—the dominant story line—is that Spitzer doesn't have the collaborative temperament or the tactical elasticity to be a governor. To his critics, who complained that he exploited the attorney general's office to gain the governor's mansion, he was too political to be a prosecutor and yet is now too prosecutorial to be a politician.

But amid all the rancor, the bad press, and the souring of his prospects, the Governor has kept at it, admitting little in the way of doubt or regret, and seeing the "pushback," as he and his circle describe it, as evidence of headway. He has continued to conduct whatever business he can, drawing on the ample power granted him by the office, while travelling around the state, announcing initiatives and presiding at groundbreakings, as though taking refuge in the expanse of his obligations and the far reaches of his domain. He has not spent a great deal of time in Albany, the epicenter of his troubles, availing himself of the state-owned air fleet—a source and symbol of geographic freedom and power (and of its occasional abuses). As the early astronauts observed, altitude and distance bring a certain cohesion into view.

"The enormity of this state, it's awesome," Spitzer said one afternoon in October, while passing over it in an airplane, on his way from Buffalo to LaGuardia Airport—an Albany-less trip along the L's hypotenuse. The plane, a twin-turboprop Beechcraft King Air, can seat eight passengers comfortably. Gray cloud cover around Lake Erie had given way to clear skies and sprawling inland vistas in high-autumn orange. "I think we're seeing the Finger Lakes right up here," Spitzer said, looking out his window. "Sometimes you can see the windmills." He unfolded a tattered highway map. "I've had this in my briefcase going on nine years now. It's from back when I was driving myself around, campaigning for attorney general, in '97, '98." He pointed out where he thought we were (near Geneva), as well as where he'd been the day before (Albany, Potsdam, Camden), where he'd started in the morning (Syracuse, to speak at a conference of entrepreneurs), where he'd flown next (Buffalo, to make the first in a blitz of announcements of "City-by-City" upstate development

"I feel sometimes like I'm sinking into quicksand," Spitzer says of life as governor. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.



projects), and where his family's farm was (on a crease in the map, in Columbia County). The map was dense with gubernatorial significance and opportunities for Spitzer to demonstrate a prodigious grasp of policy detail.

Spitzer, who is forty-eight, has a prominent nose, chin, and forehead, a hard jawline, and deep-set eyes whose intensity can give the extremely mistaken impression that he wears eyeliner. When he smiles or gets angry, his jaw juts out, underbitishly. The vigor in his features and in his manner, and his lean frame, tend to inspire descriptions of a man tilting into the wind. On the flight, he was fidgety, in keeping with his reputation for impatience and hyperactivity, but he displayed an acuity for brisk small talk: sports, kids, Bruce Springsteen. From the first time I'd met him, however, a month before, and in the course of a half-dozen interviews this fall, he strove to devote our conversations to the substance of governing, to assess his first and next year in terms of his accomplishments and goals. He had, it is true, got a lot done (especially by Albany standards) before the acrimony took hold. He had recently looked at his State of the State speech from last January and concluded that he'd accomplished three-quarters of what he'd hoped to do. He had reformed the budget process, the workers'-compensation system, and the financing of health care and education. Like politicians everywhere, he seemed frustrated that the media was so focussed on the tumult—that his message wasn't getting out. For months, the papers had been full of intricate accounts of political or legal maneuverings, many involving his deepening feud with Bruno. On the day of the Governor's flight from Buffalo, the *Post* ran a picture of Bruno and Spitzer at a memorial service for firefighters, in which Bruno is standing with his back to Spitzer, with the headline "BACK 'BURNER': JOE GIVES SPITZ THE TAIL END."

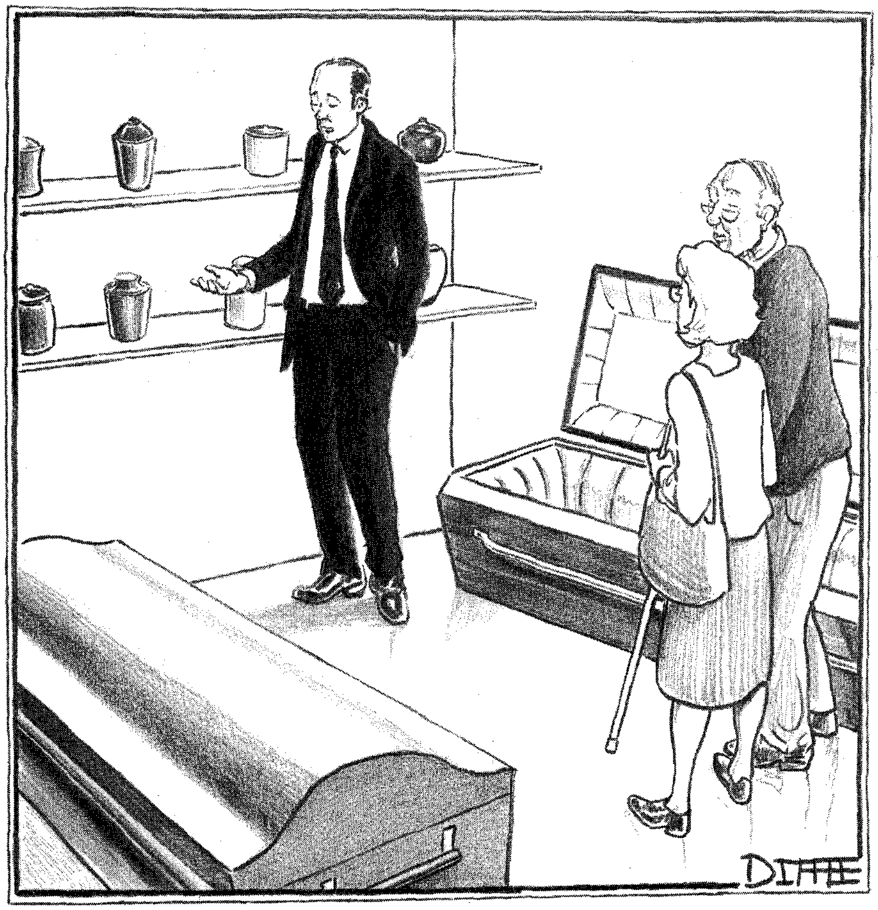
"The stuff with Bruno? That hasn't distracted me," Spitzer said. "Look, I know what this is. It's about nothing. This is an effort to distract us from governing. I'm not going to let that happen."

An anxious supporter of the Governor's had told me, when he heard I was going to see Spitzer, "Ask him, how does he learn." Spitzer is known to be a fast and thorough absorber of information. He remains the capable and diligent student he was in school. (His sister remembers him doing his homework with his tongue sticking out of the side of his mouth.) On television, he speaks in long, complex sentences and hews to a rigorous line of logic, and when you tell him things he remembers them. Learning would not seem to be an issue. But the supporter's question seemed to contain a note of "Will he ever learn?"—as in, learn when to let an opponent take a round, when not to antagonize people, when not to act as though he needed to prove that he's the smartest man in the room.

"How do I learn? I call people," Spitzer told me. Recently, he had been soliciting counsel from an array of eminences (Bill Clinton, Robert Rubin, Jerry Speyer) and old Albany hands. But when I asked him what was the best advice he'd received so far, he said, " 'Ignore most of the advice we're giving you.' " He went on, "What I have found is that the toughest decisions and the right answers to those tough decisions are still the ones that you come to when you just sit down and you say, 'O.K., what are we trying to do? What are the right moral values to guide it?' Ignore all the politics. Ignore the screaming and shouting."

He certainly put that principle to work on his driver's-license initiative. On September 21st, Spitzer decreed that any immigrant here illegally be given the right to get a New York State driver's license. An applicant would have to produce a foreign passport (in lieu of a Social Security card), the legitimacy of which would be verified by state-of-the-art technology. Eight other states had similar policies. In Spitzer's view, since the federal government had failed to deal with the influx of immigrants, the responsibility fell to the states. With an estimated million undocumented aliens in New York, he reasoned, it would be best to get them licensed. The roads would be safer, and immigrants' vital information would be added to the Department of Motor Vehicles database, an essential investigative tool for law enforcement.

During his campaign, Spitzer had promised to make this change, but it seemed to take everyone by surprise. He



"No, the urns are pretty much one size fits all."

had not briefed the Legislature, arguing, technically correctly, that the D.M.V. is the executive chamber's responsibility. In the early days, it hardly seemed controversial. "Even Joe Bruno, of all people"—as Spitzer put it on NY1—said that he could see the merits of it at first, as did the editorial boards of most of the newspapers in the state.

A week later, Mayor Bloomberg raised questions about the plan, citing worries that it would diminish a license's value. In a characteristic display of excessive rhetorical aggression, Spitzer responded, "He is wrong at every level—dead wrong, factually wrong, legally wrong, morally wrong, ethically wrong," at which point the story moved to the fore. In Buffalo, where I'd watched him make the City-by-City announcement, the driver's-license issue dominated the media scrums. Spitzer seemed to be relishing the opportunity to re-state the virtues of his proposal (bringing undocumented aliens "out of the shadows"), resolute in the idea that sound logic—or his logic, at least—would prevail.

Already, though, the plan was gathering third-rail heat. Spitzer's opponents had begun to frame it as a terrorism issue. James Tedisco, the minority leader in the Republican Assembly—to whom Spitzer had said, earlier in the year, "I'm a fucking steamroller, and I'll roll over you"—declared, "Osama bin Laden is somewhere in a cave with his den of thieves and terrorists, and he's probably sabering the cork on some champagne right now, saying, 'Hey, that governor's really assisting us.'"

On the flight back from Buffalo to the city, I asked Spitzer if he'd had any doubts about his tactics or his timing—why take on such a volatile issue when he was already weakened by Troopergate? "Nah!" he said. I later learned that there had been some debate within his administration, but in the end Spitzer had decided that, as he put it, "If it's right, it's right. We'd done the work; let's move on it."

After a turbulent descent over northern New Jersey—another opportunity for a display of unflappability—we flew alongside Manhattan, down the Hudson River, past the West Side rail yards, for which the state was collecting development proposals, and the construction site at Ground Zero, another state project, and he gave upbeat mini-dissertations on the status of each. Over Brooklyn, I asked him whether he ever thought, surveying the state from the air, "Mine, all mine."

"Yeah, that's *just* what I think," he said.

These days, the state is teeming with political gurus, of both the paid and the armchair varieties, who can offer up the kind of metaphorical advice that a man as literal-minded as Spitzer may have trouble integrating into his grand strategy or his daily life. A close friend suggested that he bring more "poetry" to governing. When I mentioned this one day to Spitzer, who had just announced the reopening of a long-moribund airfield in Orange County, he said, "Well, I'm not sure if the poetry is the speech, or if the poetry is the reality that suddenly Stewart Airport is open and transportation from there will permit business to thrive in the Hudson Valley." When he speaks about his goals and beliefs, he cites Alexander Hamilton, Theodore Roosevelt, and Al Smith, who to his mind represent the three pillars of progressivism: "My job is to invest, the way Hamilton did; make sure the rules are enforced, the way T.R. did; and make sure everyone has a chance to play by those rules, which is what Al Smith stood for."

Spitzer's agenda, broadly and loftily speaking, is to make the workings of Albany more transparent: to disentangle the corrosive influence of the special interests and to combat, if not eliminate, the nest-feathering that flourishes in the dark. Campaign-finance reform is an essential part of this. More specifically, he aims to overhaul the state's health and education systems, streamline local governments, and resuscitate the upstate economy. Avi Schick, a senior economic-development official in the administration, told me, "Eliot wants to transform the government. But it's hard to encapsulate this in a sound bite or to see the results immediately. It's hard to explain to people how competence affects their lives." Spitzer's progressivism, distilled a certain way, is a will to competence, which raises the question of whether competence can be willed.

Bruce Gyory, a longtime Albany lobbyist, lawyer, and amateur historian, told me, on the day before he was hired to be a special aide to the Governor, "I see Spitzer as a young Koufax." Early on, Sandy Koufax had great stuff but was inconsistent, until he was advised to loosen his grip on the ball. "If Spitzer learns to relax his grip a little, trust his stuff, he'll be fine. Get ahead of the hitters." ("I hope Bruce has better stuff than that," Spitzer remarked, when I repeated it to him.)

Some of the comparisons aren't as flattering. An Albanian who is in Spitzer's party but no longer in his camp compared the Governor to an alcoholic who can't be helped until he acknowledges that he has a problem. Another assessed what he felt were Spitzer's shortcomings in graphic terms: "Spitzer lunges. He seems not to be a person of strategy. He slipped on a banana peel, or six, and once down has thrashed around."

Gyory is a font of analogies. "Be General Grant—even if everyone wants Robert E. Lee and cavalry charges," he said. "Politics is like trench warfare. Defense wins. We don't have the political equivalent of a tank that lets you roll over the opposition. The question for Spitzer is, can he develop the tank?"

Spitzer is a lawyer, a logician, a tactician, a policy fanatic, but not a deep thinker or a self-doubter. He is not inclined toward wistfulness or wonder, which is not to say that he isn't caring or curious. It is often said by those who know him, and by Spitzer himself, that what you see is what you get. When I first met him, he said, with some disdain, "You going to write about my childhood?" A month later, he said, "Let me ask you: is my life much more boring than people presume? And don't you think most lives are?"

He's didactic. He says "Look" a lot. He's a world-class square, but he can be funny and good-natured. His humor relies on mockery, of others and of himself, although his self-deprecations often end in self-aggrandizement. His stock "stupid story about missing class," as he called it—about going back to Harvard Law School and being ribbed by two professors for not having ever gone to their lectures—ended with the punch line "Yeah, but has it hurt my career?" The most commonly heard criticism of him, which has dogged him at least since his days as attorney general, is that he is a bully, which encompasses not just professional aggression but also what many regard as a preening rectitude and a tendency toward intellectual arrogance.

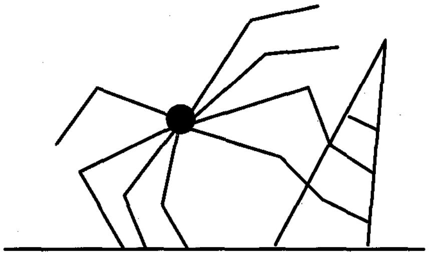
He understands that his idiosyncrasies, his hyperachiever habits, are both salutary and worthy of ribbing. When you are followed around every day by a mob of reporters and aides, your mannerisms, however sincere, can soon seem like affectations. Squareness can come off as shtick. He wears only white button-down shirts, which he buys at Brooks Brothers. He bought a blue one once: "It was unnerving. Never wore it." He gets up at five in the morning to jog; he's known for it, and wants you to know it, but if it's a pose it's a hard-earned one. His first thought upon waking each day, he says, is a wish for two more hours' sleep.

He comes from a family of achievers. His father, Bernard, and his mother, Anne, both the children of Jewish immigrants, grew up in cold-water flats on the Lower East Side. Bernard built a half-billion-dollar real-estate empire, consisting primarily of residential apartment buildings in Manhattan. Eliot, born in 1959, is the youngest of three children; his sister, the eldest, is a lawyer, and his brother is a neurosurgeon. The Spitzer clan is eccentric only in its heightened devotion to attainment and argument. On the spectrum of rich-kid gumption, he and his siblings are at the extreme end. They grew up in the Fieldston section of Riverdale, a well-to-do corner of the Bronx, where Eliot attended Horace Mann, a private school. It can seem churlish to call attention to a man's privileged background, unless that man, either out of embarrassment or political expediency, takes pains to gloss over it. Spitzer sometimes makes more of his outer-borough credentials than any son of Riverdale should. During a dispute at a conference several years ago, the California attorney general challenged him to a fight, saying, "Let's go—I'm from Oakland," to which Spitzer replied, "Come on—I'm from the Bronx!"

The Spitzer family dinner table has become legendary. Bernie Spitzer was a demanding father, and he expected his children to come to supper with a topic for debate and a well-researched argument. "Conversation was a competitive sport," William Taylor, Spitzer's roommate at Princeton and a co-founder of the magazine *Fast Company*, told me. Taylor has said that he prepared harder for those dinners than he did for any of his classes. "Bernie Spitzer in his prime was both thrilling and terrifying," he said. It was not an emotionally indulgent household, or a religious one. (The potential first Jewish President was not bar mitzvahed.)

At Princeton, Spitzer cultivated a friendship with the president, William Bowen. An avid tennis player, Spitzer once tried to play squash with Bowen, and thought, being young and fit, that he'd lick him, but Bowen ran him all over the court. "He gave me a lesson in tactics over strength," he told me, apparently oblivious of the metaphorical application of his words to his Albany travails. As a sophomore, he won, precociously, the presidency of the student government, but he has always claimed that he was not interested in politics—just policy. He attended Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, then Harvard Law, where he made the *Law Review* and became, with his close friend Cliff Sloan, who is now the publisher of *Slate*, an acolyte of Alan Dershowitz. Cliffeliot, as the duo was known, assisted Dershowitz in his defense of Claus von Bülow, the socialite who had been accused of the attempted murder of his wife (he was eventually acquitted). In the film about that case, "Reversal of Fortune," Cliffeliot became a team featuring a female duo played by Felicity Huffman and Annabella Sciorra.

While at Harvard, Spitzer met Silda Wall, a fellow-student, on a ski trip to Vermont. Wall was from North Carolina and had recently been divorced, after a brief marriage to another law student. She and Spitzer married three years later, in 1987. They have three daughters, age twelve to seventeen. Silda worked for many years as a corporate lawyer at Skadden, Arps, then, with some misgivings, gave up her practice to look after the family and her husband's political career. She brings a certain politesse to Team Spitzer. When I met her, she was resolutely composed and on message, except perhaps when talking about the family's midsummer hike up Mt. Marcy, the state's tallest peak. They ran out of water and, as she said, "we had not really thought out the food piece of this." They live in one of Bernard Spitzer's buildings, on Fifth Avenue at Seventy-ninth Street, a half block from the home of Michael Bloomberg, in an enclave of what you might call self-capitalized crossover political talent.



For fourteen years, Spitzer went back and forth between public service and private practice. He was a clerk to a federal district-court judge, Robert Sweet, and an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, where he helped bust up Gambino control of garment-industry trucking (Spitzer established a fake sewing shop in Chinatown, as a front). In 1994, he ran for attorney general but came in last among the Democrats, then spent the next several years travelling around the state in a minivan, cultivating support for another run.

Perhaps the most significant support came from his family. The 1994 campaign had been funded in large part by a $4.3-million bank loan that Spitzer took out, using as collateral some apartments that he owned; he told the press that he was servicing the loan with his own income. In 1998, a few days before Election Day, in a nasty race with the incumbent, Dennis Vacco, he admitted that he had been paying off the bank with a loan his father had given him on generous terms. In effect, he'd received a $4.3-million campaign donation from his father, which is well in excess of family donation limits, and lied about it. (The Board of Elections declined to investigate.) Michael Goodwin, a columnist at the *News*, asked Spitzer why he'd lied, and Spitzer told him, according to Goodwin, "I had to"—a phrase that Spitzer's detractors have lorded over him ever since, as a kind of shorthand for a streak of dishonesty and hypocrisy. (Spitzer says that he doesn't remember any such conversation.) Nonetheless, after a hotly contested recount, Spitzer won.

Spitzer's tenure as a state attorney general may be the most heavily chronicled of any in America's history. He reimagined the office, inserting it into the void left by a general regulatory retreat by the federal government. He regarded his activism as a logical and just extension of a new states'-rights movement, which had been conceived as an attempt to roll back oversight and advance a conservative, laissez-faire agenda, but which Spitzer interpreted as an invitation to state-led intercession and prosecutorially mandated policy change. With great gusto, he went after big polluters, pharmaceutical companies, gun manufacturers, and, most notably, the financial industry, where various harmful and fraudulent practices had taken root—insincere equity research, shady market timing, bid rigging. As many saw it, Spitzer's modus operandi was to build a case against his targets, then push the most egregious allegations in the media, which put unbearable public pressure on the targets to settle. And settle they almost invariably did. Spitzer earned an impressive array of scalps, admirers, headlines, and plaudits for reform, as well as a coterie of powerful enemies, whose indignation toward his media manipulations, disproportionate tactics, and occasionally shallow understanding of their businesses tended to be drowned out by the widespread public disgust engendered by their greed.

Brooke Masters, in "Spoiling for a Fight," her 2006 biography of Spitzer, meticulously recapitulates each prosecution—the regulatory turf battles, the legal dekes and dodges, the mutating rationales—creating a portrait of a righteous and far from infallible crusader employing every tactical advantage that his office makes available to him. He does not always come off well. (All the same, his parents have the book on the coffee table at their house in Rye.) His detractors tend to complain that the press created Eliot Spitzer—that the Sheriff of Wall Street, to use one moniker, was a fantasy of the liberal, wealth-resenting media. And so they take some satisfaction in the fact that the pendulum seems to have swung back on him, with so much force that you'd think it was spring-loaded.

"Day One, everything changes," Spitzer pronounced during his campaign for governor, as though he'd be taking over the Knicks, instead of one cog in a sprawling and intransigent political mechanism. The extent to which he has delivered (or, more fairly, will be able to deliver) on this promise depends on whom you talk to and what your definition of "change" is. As one lobbyist told me, "Day One, everything changes. Day Three Hundred, nothing moves."

Tracking how Spitzer got into this mess requires forbearance in the face of squalid statehouse wranglings. The feints and stalemates—combining arid political gamesmanship with fits of pique worthy of "Mean Girls"—tie into a web of purpose and allegiance that can be hopelessly complex, but it helps to know a couple of things.

COMB-OVER ADVISORY
McTwohy

First, 2008 is an election year. The Republicans have a thin margin in the State Senate—which they have controlled for all but one of the past sixty-nine years—with seats in vulnerable, Democratic-trending districts. The Democrats have held the majority in the Assembly since 1975. If the Republicans lose the Senate, the Democrats will have a monopoly in the state government, and the power to gerrymander districts in their favor, at the congressional as well as the state level. Also, Joe Bruno would no longer be majority leader. The Republicans, therefore, are desperate, and in their desperation they have apparently settled on a sand-in-the-gears strategy. It is not in their interest to help make Spitzer look good. They seem to have resolved to depict him as angry and unstable. ("The press somehow confuses intensity with anger," Bill Taylor, his old roommate, told me. "I see him as a happy warrior.") The extent to which they can hurt him, while making it look as though he is hurting himself—and the state—will determine the survival of their party. To float an analogy that they would not embrace: their predicament is not unlike that of the Sunnis in Iraq.

Second, the entrenched Democrats are uneasy, too. Spitzer has made them so, both in his challenge to the status quo and in his mishandling of his relations with them. The political system in Albany favors stasis. The name of the game, of course, is the preservation of power, which means that whoever has it will rig the game to keep it. Bruno and Sheldon Silver, the speaker of the Assembly, wield immense power over their conferences; they effectively decide if and when a bill comes to the floor and then tell everyone how to vote. They dole out what are known as "lulus," or payments to legislators for extra duties that can be, let's say, undemanding. They also disburse their party's campaign funds, seeing to it that incumbents win more than ninety-five per cent of their races. The institutions with the wherewithal to provide the money are the oft-maligned but never curtailed special interests. The leaders excel at harnessing all these stakeholders. In particular, Silver, who represents lower Manhattan, is determinedly stubborn and patient. His modest manner disguises a canny parliamentary style. The contingencies can get so intricate and self-annulling that very little gets done.

Spitzer's first hostile act as governor—a gentle one, by Spitzer standards—occurred in his inaugural speech. "Like Rip

Van Winkle," he pronounced, "New York has slept through much of the past decade while the rest of the world has passed us by." The remark, evocative and accurate as it may have been, struck many present as indecorous, disrespectful not only of George Pataki, his predecessor, who was in attendance, but of Bruno and Silver, the presumably somnambulant collaborators, who were seated right behind Spitzer. "That was a cheap shot," Jack McEneny, a Democratic assemblyman, told me. "Save it for the Bronx Democratic dinner." Of course, comportment was not high on Spitzer's priority list. To break the stagnant culture of Albany, he intended to do away with the rhetoric, as well as the practice, of accommodation. He would relish the disjointing of noses.

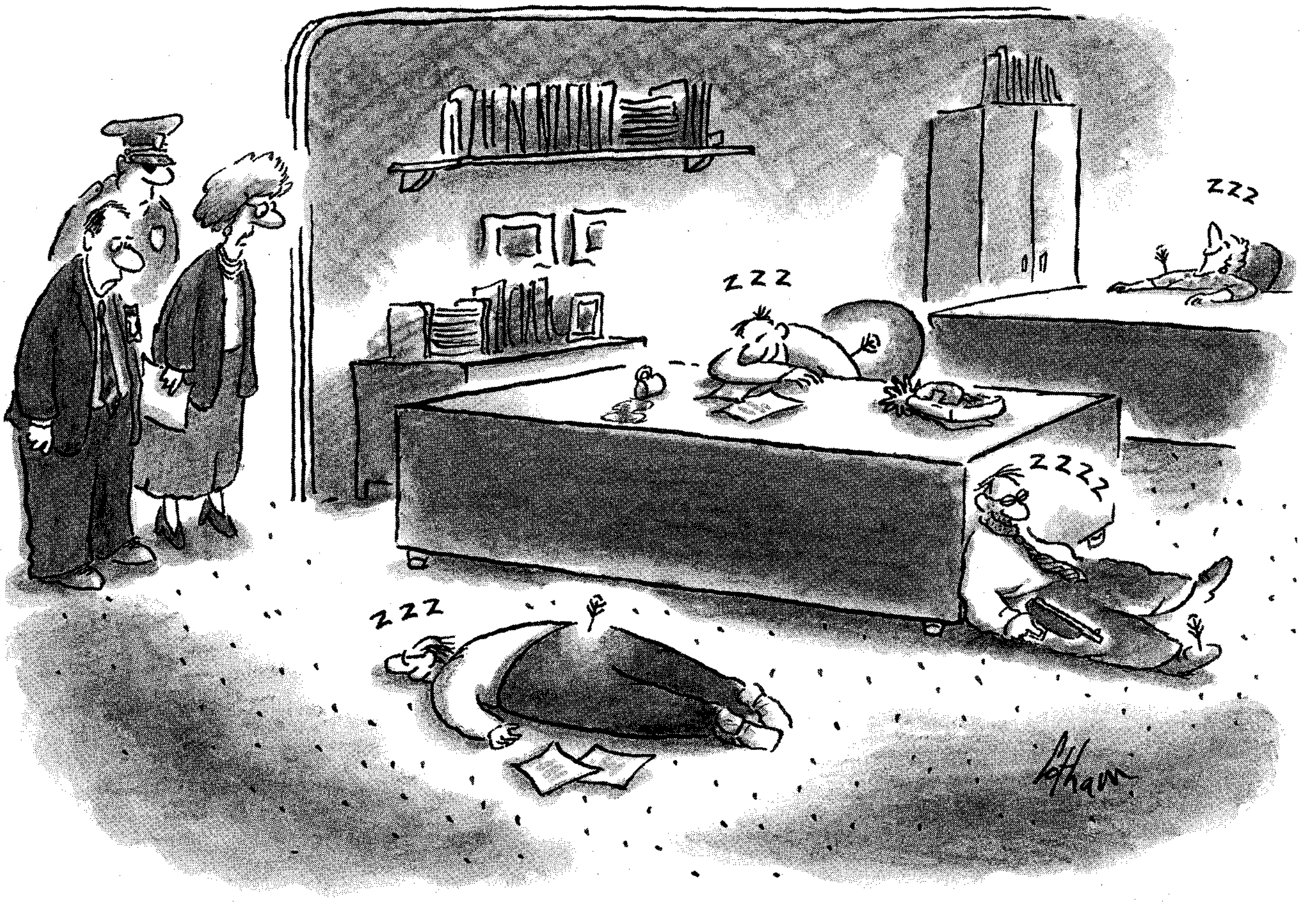
"Any controversies largely come down to this once-in-a-lifetime effort to break the culture," a senior aide told me, meaning not just that of the legislators but also that of their complements: the Albany press, the union leadership, the executive directors of the state agencies. "You teach people lessons and force people to do it a different way."

The disdain that Spitzer and his aides had for the niceties of the capitol caused early offense. The legislative staffs complained that Spitzer's team didn't know their names or titles. Deference had been replaced by indifference. "It makes no sense to squander good will when it's there for free," one legislator said. "The problem is arrogance." Spitzer is fond of saying that politics is like a sporting contest: you go out, play hard, and shake hands when it's over. He cites Theodore Roosevelt's invocation of "the arena." Of course, for most of his colleagues, politics is not a game but a livelihood. "Tip O'Neill said all politics is local," McEneny said. "In Albany, I say, all politics is personal."

Pete Grannis, a former assemblyman from Manhattan who now heads Spitzer's Department of Environmental Conservation, told me, "The leaders, by design or fatigue, have devolved into accommodation mode. Pataki sort of wore out." The legislators, he explained, "have a very parochial focus on survival. And fund-raising is the third rail. I told the Governor, 'The Legislature is like your in-laws. You're stuck with them.' "

Right away, Spitzer got into a fight with the Democrats over the appointment of a successor to Alan Hevesi, the state comptroller, who had been forced to resign after pleading guilty to using state employees as chauffeurs for his ailing wife. The Legislature was empowered to choose a successor. Spitzer wanted someone he deemed qualified, rather than a machine hire. But Silver prevailed, choosing one of his own assemblymen, Thomas DiNapoli, and Spitzer, furious, began paying recriminatory visits to the districts of some Democratic legislators who had voted with Silver (and who had supported Spitzer's own campaign), questioning their integrity as well as their standing come primary time. "The temper tantrum that occurred after the DiNapoli affair did almost irreparable harm to the relationship between the Governor and the Democrats in the Legislature," McEneny said. "There were a lot of hurt feelings."

There are people on Spitzer's team who consider the DiNapoli ruckus to have been one of their finest hours. It is hard for them to see how anybody could object to their insisting on competence. Spitzer,



"And then he turned the tranquillizer gun on himself."

though, seems to realize that it was at least a short-term tactical error. "Let's face it—it was not a good beginning for my relationship with the Legislature," he told me. "I may have had the moral high ground, but having the moral high ground didn't help with Albany relations."

Meanwhile, Spitzer was working to overthrow the Republican majority in the Senate. The Republicans' margin has been slipping, and a few of its senior members, from districts that otherwise lean Democratic, are in their mid-seventies. Historical inevitability hangs over Bruno, a former boxer who is seventy-eight years old and in his sixteenth term in the State Senate, as does a federal investigation into a consulting business that he runs out of his home. (He has denied any wrongdoing.)

Spitzer sought to hasten things. He or his staff made overtures to several Republican legislators, offering them jobs in his administration, which would come with higher salaries and better pensions, if they gave up their seats. One Long Island Republican signed on to be his homeland-security chief, and Spitzer successfully campaigned for a Democrat to replace him. This narrowed the Republican majority—and Bruno's hold on power—to two seats. Such incursions have long been all but proscribed in Albany; Bruno told me that Spitzer had been "bribing several of my members" and "dishonest." Once again, however, it was difficult for Spitzer and his aides to understand how, on the merits, there could be anything wrong with going after the opposition party.

Never one to hold his tongue, Bruno began publicly disparaging Spitzer, calling him a rich spoiled brat and a bully. Spitzer, more measured in public, slipped up in private, as when, according to one person familiar with the exchange, he said to a legislator, in the course of calling attention to his own respect for decorum, "I could have called Bruno a senile piece of shit, but I never did." Amid these squalls, the two men, with Silver, were trying to forge a budget deal. Early on, Spitzer had managed to pass some bills that Bruno had long advocated anyway; Spitzer's job, as Bruno saw it, had been to "roll" Silver. But then Spitzer, in an attempt to cut medical spending, took on 1199 S.E.I.U., the giant health-care-workers union, which is a longtime kingmaker and one of the Senate Republicans' major backers. (Big unions in bed with the Republicans? Only in New York, kids, only in New York.) "We gored the ox of the patron of the Senate," as one aide put it. The union spent almost five million dollars—an extraordinary amount—on television advertisements attacking Spitzer, prompting him to counter with an ad blitz underwritten with his leftover campaign funds and five hundred thousand dollars of his own money. Still, for the first time, his poll numbers started to fall.

To some astonishment, the three men managed to come to an agreement on a budget by the April 1st deadline, but they did so in a closed-door session that gave rise to bitter complaints that Spitzer had condoned and participated in the kind of secrecy that he had promised to eliminate. What's more, he had compromised on several big items, including Medicaid spending and school funding, for which he was also criticized.

But this was just a prelude to the most insidious diversion from what the professionals like to call the business of governing: Troopergate, a.k.a. Choppergate, the Dirty Tricks Scandal, Eliot Mess, or, to some of Spitzer's team, "the recent unpleasantness." It has given rise to a set of opposing interpretations, the merits of which are still contested. What is uncontested is that it has been devastating to Eliot Spitzer.

Being on the receiving end of prosecutorial curiosity has exposed Spitzer to the kind of public rush to judgment that, as attorney general, he used to exploit, and he has handled it with the kind of cautious evasion that he used to deplore.

Troopergate, judging from subsequent investigations, began last spring with an inquiry, from several newspapers, into a fund-raising trip that Spitzer had made to California. The papers wanted to know whether he had flown on the state plane. The Governor and the leaders are allowed to use the plane and two state helicopters if the purpose of the trip is state business, but using them for personal or fund-raising purposes is a breach, albeit a time-honored one. (Mario Cuomo, for example, had an Air Cuomo scandal, involving numerous flights that his wife and kids took when he was governor.) Spitzer hadn't used the plane on that trip, but Darren Dopp, his communications director, decided to look at additional flights, including those made by the lieutenant governor, David Paterson, and Joseph Bruno, because, he told investigators, of continued interest from reporters, which he anticipated would lead to follow-up Freedom of Information requests. He didn't have the kind of information about Bruno's day-by-day schedule and appointments that he did about Spitzer's and Paterson's, so Dopp—and here's the rub—asked the state police to collect whatever they had. So, rather than just pulling records, they were, in some cases, creating them retroactively and, at the same time, learning a lot about what Bruno was up to.

The police delivered reports to Dopp that suggested that Bruno's flights might be improper, if not necessarily illegal. For example, there was an overnight trip, with a fund-raiser in the evening and a bit of state business in the morning, requiring separate round-trip helicopter flights (at thousands of dollars a flight). Dopp took the information to Spitzer and top members of his staff, and they decided to sit on it; as Spitzer and his staff knew, the laws governing the use of the plane were lax. But then James Odato, a reporter at the Albany *Times Union*, made a Freedom of Information request for the travel records, and Dopp, again after consulting with Spitzer and his top staff, furnished the information to Odato.

It isn't clear to what extent Odato's inquiry was self-generated. Odato had done stories on government travel before, but e-mails released by investigators suggest that Dopp may have been shopping the story around. It's hard not to suspect, anyway, that Dopp was looking to hurt Bruno, and that he wouldn't have done so without his boss's blessing. Whether that constituted "a desire to run state government as a dictatorship," as Bruno would later assert, or merely an instance of hardball politics is now a matter of interpretation. (It could be both.) Nonetheless, the plan, if it was one, backfired. It tarnished Spitzer's image, among the many citizens who had not yet questioned it, as an upright avatar of fair play, and transformed Bruno from the heavy into the victim.

When the *Times Union* story about Bruno's trips ran, on July 1st, Bruno reared up. "I told the Governor directly I have dealt with bullies and rogues and thugs most of my life, O.K.?" he said. "I grew up in the toughest part of Glens Falls, next to the boxcars, where kids would come up to you when you weighed ninety pounds and they weighed a hundred and twenty and just punch you right in the mouth just because you were Italian, O.K.? . . . So swing away." (Glens Falls isn't the Bronx, but it would have to do.) Within days, Bruno managed to alchemize the allegations into a story about a surveillance campaign and an abuse of power.

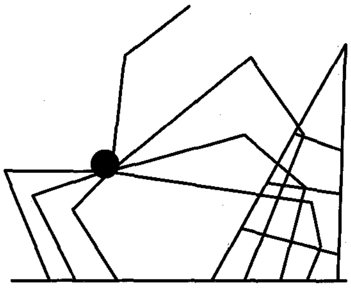
Andrew Cuomo, Spitzer's successor in the attorney general's office—a fellow-Democrat but no dear friend—opened an investigation. Spitzer's lawyers, taking a cautious legal stance, and perhaps worried that Cuomo was out to get them, decided not to let Spitzer's staffers talk to Cuomo's investigators. Their meagre coöperation—Spitzer subsequently said they had "fully coöperated"—seemed to harden Cuomo's stance. (Cuomo, out of both temperament and ambition, seems to have modelled his approach to state prosecuting on Spitzer's.)

Cuomo issued his report after three weeks, and it was harsh. Although it absolved the Spitzer team of any illegality, it excoriated them for essentially deploying the state police in a political hit. Dopp was put on unpaid leave (he has since gone to work at a lobbying firm), and Spitzer published a self-flagellating Op-Ed piece in the *Times*, "An Apology from Albany," in which he said, "What members of my administration did was wrong—no ifs, ands or buts." Still, he had said that the mistakes were his staff's, and that he himself had known nothing about any attempt to smear Bruno.

Since then, Troopergate has settled into a tense legal standoff involving unanswered subpoenas and claims of executive privilege. The Albany County district attorney took up the case, as did the Commission of Public Integrity and the Senate. The Albany D.A.'s report, released in September—on the same day that Spitzer announced his driver's-license initiative—was mild enough in its conclusions to prompt Bruno to dismiss it as a whitewash. The Republicans, and the majority of New Yorkers polled, want Spitzer to testify under oath about who knew and did what when, but Spitzer has yet to do so because, he says, he hasn't been asked to: "I'd love to. Wish I had when this first came up." He regards the case as "a ridiculous detour," the aftermath of which may have been handled poorly, at least to judge by the results. When I asked him, for example, if it was a mistake for his lawyers not to have allowed his aides to talk to Cuomo, he said, "It certainly didn't play out wisely. No question about that."

During the summer, in the absence of any actual legislative work, the saga occasionally turned surreal. There was an improbably sourced but entertaining report in the *Post* that Spitzer aides were holding secret meetings in black Town Cars, riding around the outskirts of Albany, to avoid using e-mail or the phone. One night, an anonymous caller left a threatening recorded message for Spitzer's father, who is eighty-three and suffering from Parkinson's. Referring to the old campaign-finance allegations, the caller said, in part, "You will be arrested and brought to Albany. And there is not a goddam thing your phony, psycho, piece-of-shit son can do about it." A private investigator traced the call to Roger Stone, a Republican political consultant and former Lee Atwater associate who had been hired by the Senate Republicans. Stone denied making the call and cited as an alibi his attendance at the play "Frost/Nixon." (Stone got his start working for Nixon, and appeared in the New York *Observer* after the call, showing off a Nixon tattoo between his shoulder blades.) But then it emerged that he'd been at the play on a different night. He still denies making the call, claiming that the voice in the message is that of an impersonator. "It was shocking for two reasons," Spitzer told me. "One, that they would do it. And, two, how bizarrely obvious they were in what they did." He added, "Imagine if *I* had done that."

In a way, Troopergate has become a sort of Rorschach test: each constituency sees in it what it wants to see. For the Spitzer team, it's both no big deal and a symbol of monumental pushback. For the Republicans, it's both a dastardly conspiracy to destroy them and a cudgel for their self-preservation. For the press, it's the best evidence yet of incompatibility, and a source of new scoops. As a veteran of bygone Albany wars explained to me, "Eliot's gotten down in the mud with these guys, and they know how to fight in the mud. They're not there because they're nice guys. They're there because they're great tactical politicians."



As for Cuomo, he may as well have announced his candidacy for governor in 2010. Cuomo, the son of the former governor Mario Cuomo, who was a Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Clinton Administration, ran unsuccessfully for governor five years ago. It can be dangerous to ascribe envy or covetousness to a man without being able to know his mind, but people do so to Cuomo all the time; they also surmise that it rankled him that Spitzer declined to endorse him in the attorney general's race until after the primary. As an Albany lobbyist told me, "We all expected Cuomo to do something like this, but thought he'd maybe wait two and a half years."

In October, while on the plane with Spitzer, I asked him whether he still talked to Cuomo.

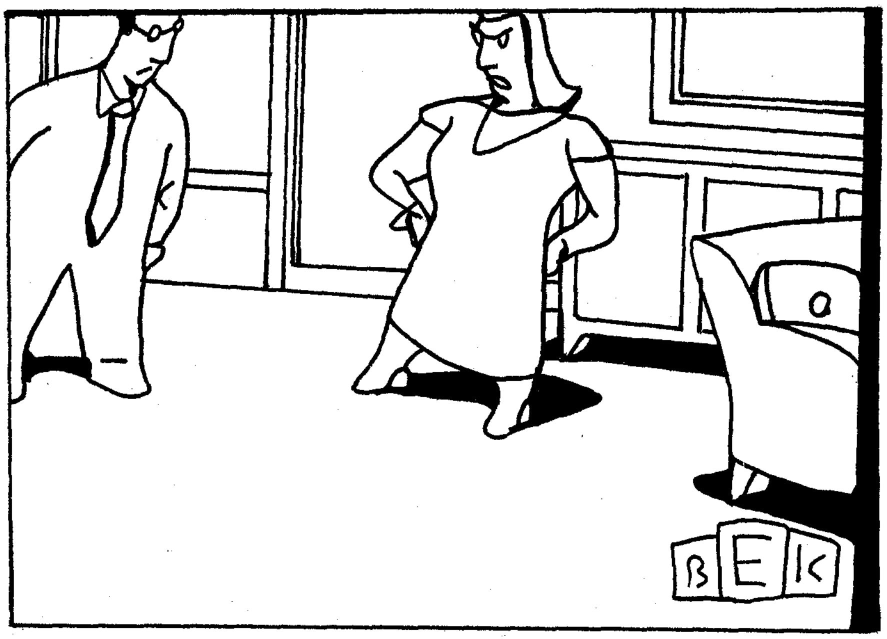
"Of course. He's my lawyer," he said, with a mischievous grin. I asked if their conversations were therefore privileged. "Yes, even the expletives are privileged," he said.

"That was a joke," Spitzer's aide said.

"No, it wasn't," Spitzer said.

One afternoon in October, I went to see Bruno, at the dedication of a new conference center on the East Campus of SUNY Albany, across the river from the capitol. Bruno's car pulled up to the curb, and as he gingerly emerged from the front passenger seat a TV cameraman, breaking away from the pack, hustled over. "Tell him to get out of my face," Bruno growled, and the cameraman scurried off, trailing apologies.

Bruno, typically hale, could hardly walk; he had hurt his hip over the weekend, climbing onto a tractor. The pain, as well as the indignity, had him in a sour mood. He was wearing as fine a suit as I'd seen in Albany. We made our way to a conference room and sat down to talk about Eliot Spitzer. "Everywhere you go, this man does and says what suits him," he said. "He operates by two standards, one for him and one for everybody else." Bruno



"I've had enough of you and your male experience."

said, as he often does, "He doesn't have the right temperament to be governor of a state as complicated as New York."

Bruno grew up poor in Glens Falls, one of eight children of Italian immigrants, and served as an infantryman in the Korean War. Afterward, he started a telephone-equipment company, which he sold in 1990. He now lives on a farm in Rensselaer County, where he and his wife raise Thoroughbreds. Every summer, Bruno, along with Senate colleagues and staffers, decamps to Saratoga, where he presides like a kind of feudal lord.

When I asked him about Spitzer and Troopergate, Bruno asked me, "What was he trying to do, do you think?"

"He was trying to take you out?" I ventured.

"No, he wasn't trying to take me out. He was trying to destroy my life!"

Bruno went on, "He is the biggest disappointment that I've had in thirty-one years of serving in political life, because I liked him on a personal level. He fooled me. And I'm pretty good with people, I have a good intuition with people. He fooled me, he hoodwinked me. And I'm embarrassed. He told me I was going to be his partner. . . . 'We're going to get all kinds of productive and constructive things done. Shelly Silver's a problem; he's not my kind of guy. I'll deal with Shelly.' " Bruno, who called Silver "the biggest wimp on this earth" (Silver has adopted a sticks-and-stones approach to Bruno's provocations), mentioned the series of bills that he had favored and that Spitzer had got passed. "Then what does he do? Now that he's on a roll, suddenly he's a hero, he worked miracles—what did he do? In my mind, his ego took over, his temperament took over, he started believing all his own press clips that he walked on water, that he was the savior of all mankind."

I asked him when they started yelling at each other. "When he said, 'I'm taking Bruno out as leader and we're taking over the majority,' " he replied.

He recalled an incident involving the Senate minority leader, Malcolm Smith ("the wimp that he is"), who had been echoing Spitzer's predictions of a Democratic takeover and whom Bruno had then pilloried. Spitzer called Bruno into his office. "So I went in," Bruno said. "He's sitting there like this." He pantomimed Spitzer's expression—chin thrust forward, eyes glaring—in a manner that made it clear that he does not like Spitzer's face. "Christ . . . So I said something like 'What's up?' He comes out of his chair, practically: 'I'll tell you! You abused Senator Smith on the floor of the chamber!' " He gave Spitzer a whiny voice. " '*Malcolm Smith*'—that's when I said, 'Malcolm Smith's got his head so far up your ass he can't even see straight.' He went crazy—screaming and shouting. Closest I've ever come to seeing something like that is a seven-year-old kid having a tantrum.

"He's a bully," Bruno said. "A spoiled brat having a tantrum because he's not getting his way."

As for the dishonesty part, he cited Spitzer's campaign-finance troubles, and the fact that Spitzer had gone after his members after he'd promised him that the two of them would be partners. "All this time he's cooking up how to bury me with the state police," he said. "If proven, it would have been criminal. I could've been in jail!"

What, then, would the Governor have to do in order for there to be peace between them? "We have to get him to just tell the truth, and I've given you instance after instance where he doesn't tell the truth," he said. "Sorry, I feel strongly about this, and the fact that I got a huge pain in my ass doesn't help. I should keep this pain all the time."

He got up and limped over to the reception, in a new annex whose construction owed a lot to funds corralled by Joe Bruno. Along the way, one of the caterers told him that he looked great, and he beamed.

"Maligning Albany is a very old game," the novelist William Kennedy wrote in the introduction to "O Albany!" his 1983 book of essays about his home town. Nonetheless, he does not refrain from playing it. Calling the town "a pinnacle of porkhead bossism," he writes, "Wickedness has been our lot for more years than any man alive can remember."

Several things about Albany strike the downstate newcomer. Near the capitol building, at least, it seems to be one of the last American towns, outside the District of Columbia, where most of the men wear suits. It can feel like a city full of detectives and bodyguards. The capitol is a stunning Romanesque-Renaissance-Second Empire mashup, a monument to a more grandiose era of New York governorships, when the second floor's principal occupant routinely went on to big things on the national stage. It was completed under Teddy Roosevelt, at a cost of twenty-five million dollars, and was widely considered to be a boondoggle. The cavernous waiting room outside the executive chamber is known as the War

"I can't believe they allow bowling in their apartment."

Room; the builders ran out of money to put up a tower but built a vaulted ceiling that was painted with bloody images of hand-to-hand combat through the ages, which seem to suit the place. Across the street from the capitol is Empire Plaza, also known as Rockefeller's Folly, a sprawling waste of modernist architecture that reflects a period of gubernatorial supreme command. Beneath it run a series of tunnels and concourses connecting the various government buildings, and from January to June, when the Legislature is in session and the budget is in play, the political professionals take to the catacombs, a race of disingenuous horse-trading troglodytes haunting the fast-food pavilions.

When I was in Albany, earlier this fall, the legislators had returned to town for a special session. After they'd dispersed at the end of the regular session, in June, with work undone, Spitzer had gone on a kind of taunting tour of the members' districts, where he delivered a PowerPoint presentation whose theme was "Where's Waldo?" Weeks later, he, Bruno, and Silver reached a tentative agreement on a raft of big initiatives, each dear to one man or the other. (For Spitzer, it was campaign-finance reform; for Bruno, it was Mayor Bloomberg's congestion-pricing plan; for both Bruno and Silver, it was property-tax relief for seniors and a pay raise for legislators.) The special session would not include a debate or a vote on any of these initiatives; instead, the Senate Republicans wanted to make a stand on the driver's-license issue. On Monday afternoon, a bell rang feebly throughout the halls of the capitol, summoning the senators to their chamber. They convened at 3 P.M.—a starting time fit for a session musician. The Republicans wandering in and out of the Senate chamber were fairly exuberant at the ammunition Spitzer had given them. As Fredric Dicker, the *Post's* longtime Albany editor and the press corps's most persistent Spitzer scourge, noted on his radio show the following morning, "It's been years since I've seen the kind of glee on the part of Republicans that we saw here yesterday."

The problem for Spitzer, and for the citizens of New York, is that the actual substance of state governance (the policy) and the application of it (the politics) are numbing. Health-care-reimbursement formulas, county-government structure, development-agency debt structure: these are not the things that capture a citizen's—or an editor's—imagination. One of the advantages to having them disputed and decided in an arcane company town, a hundred and sixty miles from the state's media center, is that voters don't need to muddle their minds with the details. A disadvantage is that all manner of faint-hearted, small-minded, cynical, greedy transactions occur out of sight. Most of the legislators and their staffs live in Albany during the session, owing to its distance from their home districts, which engenders a hothouse atmosphere, reflected in what Spitzer one afternoon called the Bear Mountain Bridge Rule, a precept named for a Hudson River crossing an hour north of Manhattan: what goes on north of the Bear Mountain Bridge stays north of the Bear Mountain Bridge. (Unfortunately for two legislators who got caught up in staffer sex scandals a few years ago—and fortunately for tabloid readers downstate—this imperative turned out to be a porous one.)

This winter, a contentious budget season looms. Wall Street, which furnishes up to twenty per cent of the state's tax revenues, has had a rough year, thanks to the subprime-mortgage mess, so unpopular cuts will make for spirited scapegoating. The legislative elections, next fall, will heighten the gamesmanship and the battle over public perception. In Albany, I met with Paul Francis, the budget director, who was attempting to reconcile the seeming impossibility and absolute necessity of getting a budget done. "One of the things I learned in business is the importance of having a coherent message about what you stand for," Francis said.

On the second floor of the capitol, I met with Dennis Whalen, Spitzer's deputy health secretary, who also served under Pataki. "Albany's acting how you would expect it to act: the organism is marshalling its antibodies," he said. Of the Spitzer agenda, he added, "Is it a virus? It may be the cure."

Bruce Gyory, Spitzer's new special aide, recently urged the Governor to read a biography he'd found, at the Strand, of Charles Evans Hughes, a governor who, a hundred years ago, went to Albany and, despite many early setbacks, managed to pass the Moreland Act, which he used to go after corruption. "Here's a guy who came in on a wave of reform. He challenged the status quo, and the status quo didn't like it. He ran into problems," Gyory told me. "It's so much easier to be a go-along, get-along governor than it is to confront." But, he added, "the power of the chief executive is the power to persuade. I have told him, the operative word in bully pulpit is 'pulpit.' "

Al Smith, whom Spitzer often cites, was actually voted out after his first two years, but won again two years later, and went on to transform the office. But, like other New York governors who found their footing, he thrived. "The notion that you're doomed if you don't get it done in your first year is an ahistorical analysis," Gyory said.

Executive-branch history is strewn with lousy first years. People often compare Spitzer with Rudy Giuliani, for his aggressive tenure as a prosecutor and for his combative, enemy-strewn governing style. But there are other useful analogues: Michael Bloomberg, whose billionaire's scorn for political ritual and collaborative capital in his first two years earned him abysmal public-approval ratings; Bill Clinton, whose ill-advised or poorly handled initiatives (gays in the military, health care) derailed his first-term agenda and handed Congress to the Republicans; and Teddy Roosevelt, another hard charger, whose confrontational ways as governor so infuriated the powers that be in New York that they had him drafted as President William McKinley's running mate, just to get rid of him.

Each instance casts Spitzer's prospects in a rosy light, predicting renewal and some measure of historical vindication. But there are counterexamples. In October, the *Times* summoned the ghost of William Sulzer, a first-year governor from Manhattan, who, in 1913, was impeached and removed from office, after too zealously attacking the corrupt Tammany Hall Democratic machine. Like Spitzer, Sulzer said, "I am a fighter," and tried to appeal directly to the voters, rather than to their representatives. "If I could tell you some things I know about Albany conditions, it would make you want to come out with a rope in your hands," Sulzer said. His disregard for the nuances laid him low.

Another analogue is President Bush, who is very different from Spitzer in most ways—temperament, ideology, fluency, firepower—but who also has the courage of his convictions, naysayers be damned. It is a comparison that Spitzer inadvertently invited, in an address he gave in August, two weeks after the release of the Cuomo report, at the Chautauqua Institution, in western New York. Spitzer invoked Reinhold Niebuhr, who "understood that the exercise of power can be shocking and, at times, corrupting. But he also understood that power is absolutely necessary to fight the battles that must be fought. The trick is to fight these battles with humility and constant introspection, knowing that there is no monopoly on virtue." He was talking about Bush, he emphasized, not himself. "President Bush didn't understand that humility has to be more than just a talking point," he said, before going on to enumerate his own accomplishments. It was a remarkable exercise in expiation by indirection.

In late October, Spitzer's press office sent out a release saying that Spitzer was preparing a major surprise announcement at an appearance at N.Y.U., on the driver's-license issue. Might Spitzer be dropping the plan? Suggesting such a thing to the reporters who regularly cover him inspired a no-chance-in-hell double take. Still, by that point opposition had crescendoed. Lou Dobbs, on CNN, had been assailing Spitzer on a nightly basis. ("How about a spoiled rich-kid brat who is treating New York residents as if he thinks they're his rich father's tenants, instead of citizens? . . . He may be what he calls a steamroller, but I think he's a weak-kneed, spineless steamroller.") And county clerks around the state, the ones responsible for issuing driver's licenses, were threatening civil disobedience. Broader discontent had spread to his own party. "We're hoping for a change of direction," McEneny, one of the Assembly's recalcitrant Democrats, said. "It's getting real late."

It turns out, however, that the surprise was merely the announcement that Richard Clarke, the counterterrorism expert, had endorsed Spitzer's plan. Afterward, I rode along with Spitzer and Rich Baum, the secretary to the Governor, on their way to a lunch with Brooklyn Democrats in Williamsburg. "Clarke was hugely important," Spitzer said. "He indisputably puts to rest the notion that at the security level this is not the right thing to do."

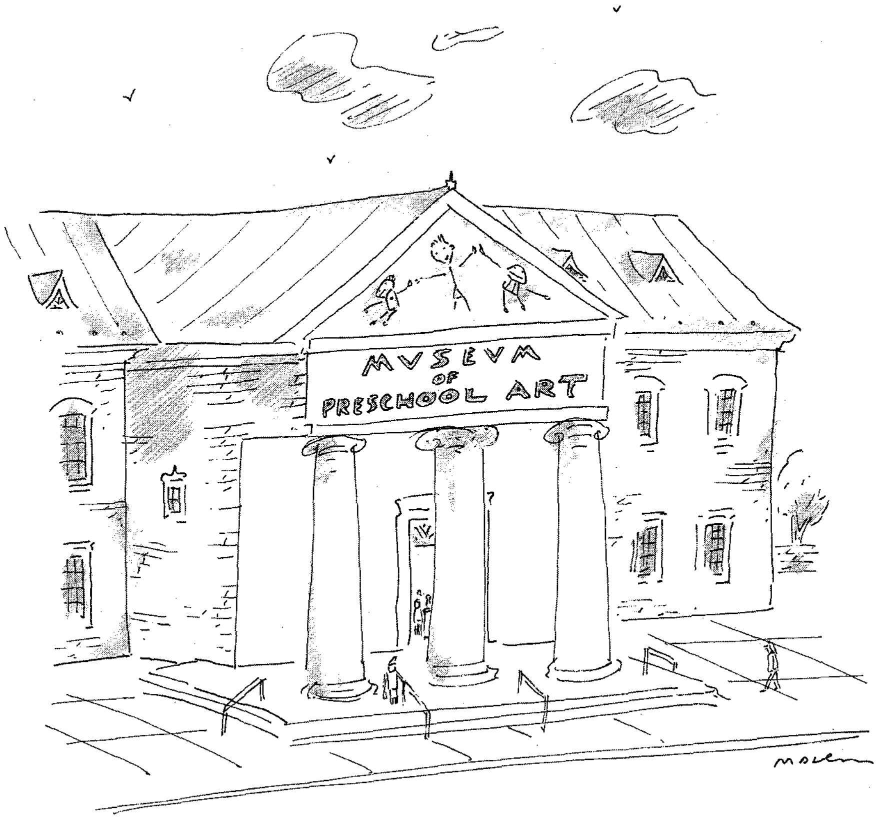
But it was too late. The plan's indisputability, in whatever platonic realm Spitzer had deemed it so, was very much in dispute in the arena.

Baum said, "We didn't make an emotional argument, because we didn't have an emotional argument. It's a cerebral issue."

"Every issue where we're a minority is a cerebral issue," Spitzer said to Baum.

I asked if they'd anticipated this much emotion.

"Remember that Monty Python skit? 'Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisi-



tion,' " Spitzer said. He hadn't watched Lou Dobbs, but he'd seen some transcripts. "I ignore it. Honestly, I ignore it. If there was a serious intellectual response to him, I would think about it very deeply. If it is essentially an ad-hominem attack, I don't care."

One night, Spitzer's office arranged for us to meet for a drink rather than talk in his office. This surprised me, since Spitzer is not an after-work-drink kind of guy. That weekend, he had gone down to Washington, D.C., and cut a deal with Michael Chertoff, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in which, once again without telling anyone, Spitzer had backpedalled on his license proposal: now the license that illegal immigrants could get would, in effect, be a limited one—for example, you couldn't use it to get on a plane—and New York would comply with the Bush Administration's plan for a federal Real I.D., an enhanced form of identification that has prompted misgivings among liberals and libertarians alike. In short, he had abandoned his supporters on the license proposal and also handed the Bush Administration a political gift. And his opponents weren't sated. If anything, they were emboldened.

We met at E.A.T., a gourmet food shop on Madison Avenue, around the corner from his apartment. A pair of black Suburbans pulled up, and he bounced out of the first one, fresh from an appearance on "Hardball," where he had parried Chris Matthews's barrage of moderately hostile license-debate recapitulations with generously uninterrupted on-message clarifications. We found a table in the back, where he learned, with some disappointment, that E.A.T. didn't serve Scotch. (I had suggested Bemelmans Bar, at the Carlyle, but Spitzer had frowned: not his scene.) He ordered a glass of white wine. Talking again about the license plan's merits, he said, "If we can get the public to focus—forget the rhetoric on both sides—focus on this as just rational policy."

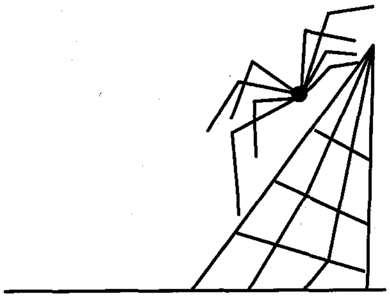
I asked him if at this point he was just playing for a draw. "If I knew what I was playing for, it'd solve a big problem," he said. He received a message on his BlackBerry: a text of remarks that Mayor Bloomberg had made, moments earlier, on CNN, in which he had condemned Spitzer's license policy. The Governor betrayed no disappointment or annoyance.

"Here's the reality: reform is a messy process. I went up to Albany with the avowed purpose of changing the way things were done. Some of the folks there don't want us to do that. They're pushing back, holding on for power," Spitzer said. "But you know what? It takes time, and there's enormous pushback. And so anybody who thought it was going to be pretty—and I'll say something now that I probably shouldn't. It's not because I've had two sips of wine. Editorial boards desperately want reform but yet desperately don't want the discomfort of seeing people fighting. And so there is a sort of a schizophrenia. They see us fighting and they say, 'Can't you guys get along?' Well, the answer is, you know, maybe not."

He had another sip of wine. "None of this is personal to me. In other words, no matter what has been said, I like Joe Bruno. I mean, it's a crazy thing for me to say. I was on the phone with him last week. We had a great chat. We had the most wonderful chat we've had in the years I've known him." (A spokesman for Bruno said of the call, "It was about a personal matter; it had nothing to do with the business of governing.")

"Joe's trying to hold on to power," Spitzer said. "That's fine. I would do the same thing if I was in his position. The media says, Oh, Spitzer, you went to Albany, you were going to change everything. It's October. What's happened? My attitude is, Guys, I'm playing for the long game. . . . I'm patient. I don't look it. I don't act it. You know what? I'm disciplined to know this isn't a one-inning game. And I'm learning that. I'm learning that." Spitzer had taken to likening the job of governor to "three-dimensional chess."

He went on, "I feel sometimes like I'm sinking into quicksand and subjected to the very significant—and sometimes appropriate—critiques of editorial pages about missteps, which I read, and, like any normal person, mutter under my breath and resent, but then take seriously. And trust me. Don't take any of this to suggest that I don't think we've made mistakes. My attitude is I will never deny we made mistakes." He is ever mindful of the example of George W. Bush, who infamously, at a 2004 press conference on the Iraq war, couldn't think of any mistakes he'd made. ("That made me cringe," he'd told me.)



"Will you discuss the mistakes?" I asked.

"No. I learned that lesson the hard way. I was with an editorial board one time, and they said, Did you make a mistake doing this or that? I said, Yeah, I should have done it this way. And I thought I was showing them that I had some capacity to be introspective—which I may or may not have, but I thought at least I'd fooled them on the issue. And, the next day, screaming headlines, 'Spitzer Admits Mistake.' So I've learned."

He went on, "We have a long time horizon, so I don't worry about the ups and downs."

By November, Spitzer had begun to entertain private doubts about the feasibility of the license plan. The first inkling came when, shortly after the Chertoff compromise, he had a sit-down with the "specialty media"—editors of Hispanic, Irish, Indian, and Chinese newspapers, among others—who told him that a lower-tier license would be a "scarlet letter." And if they would not sign up for it, then it became even harder to justify. "It was a remarkably successful political maneuver that left me standing in the middle with enemies on both sides," he reflected later. "I had a tsunami coming from one side and a hurricane coming from the other, and it was not a healthy situation to be in."

On November 6th, Spitzer gathered his core staff at his farm in Columbia County, to talk about a number of pressing issues. The last item on the agenda was the driver's-license policy. He asked his staff, "What's the move?" Some said stick it out. Others said let it go: it clearly was impeding their ability to get other things done. Spitzer emerged still committed. On a subsequent trip to Puerto Rico, he made a few philosophical comments about the nature of policymaking that indicated to reporters that he might be wavering. He told me that his words were misconstrued, but admitted, "The fact that I made those comments reflected that I was going

"Look! Here comes Ms. Celibate by Choice."

through internal evaluations"—a rare acknowledgment of the existence of the unconscious. He spent a day at the beach with his wife, their first day off together in months, and mulled it over some more.

It was, according to his staff, a wrenching process, although he was loath to admit it ("Look, I don't torture myself over decisions," he told me), not only because he felt that he was right, in policy terms, but because, according to the laws of dinner-table family argument, being right about being right is as important as being right. Political expediency, for better or worse, is not a principle he holds dear. However, on conference calls with his core staff over the weekend, he discerned that the mood had shifted: there was something approaching a bag-it consensus. Also, a few days hence, the Democratic candidates for President would be debating in Las Vegas. Hillary Clinton's equivocations on the subject of Spitzer's plan, in the previous debate, had wounded her campaign. On Tuesday morning, Baum, the secretary to the Governor, spoke with a representative from Clinton's campaign, who asked what the Governor's latest thinking was on the license issue. Baum said that the Governor had already changed his mind. Spitzer's staff had been surprised that the Clinton campaign hadn't called earlier. His communications director, Christine Anderson, told her counterpart on the Clinton campaign, Howard Wolfson, "You're going to get blamed for it." Apparently, it was a misconception that the Clinton camp could live with.

That afternoon, Spitzer called Clinton to let her know his decision and flew down to Washington, in the state plane, to announce his retreat, on terms that might flatter him. He continued to defend the policy, on the merits, and then assailed the federal government for failing to act on immigration and also criticized his opponents for their hysterical rhetoric: "The consequence of this fearmongering is paralysis." He had exhibited a new grasp of that old political talent: extracting oneself from an intractable position. That is, he had caved.

Two days later, I visited him in his office. The night before, he'd gone to a Bruce Springsteen concert in Albany with his old friends Bill Taylor and Cliff Sloan, and he'd been heartened by Springsteen's encore, a number about immigrants called "American Land." "I thought he was going to add a line like 'Don't they all need driver's licenses?' " he said. "But somehow it wasn't there." During the concert, he had checked his BlackBerry and learned that, at the debate in Vegas, Clinton, as expected, had said she was opposed to his discarded plan.

Referring to his turnaround, he said, "The problem that people have attributed to me is one of hubris, arrogance, unwillingness to shift, listen, and respond. But I did it because we are responding. We are listening. . . . Look, I may not appear to listen, but I do." Plus, he went on, "you've excised a cancer that had been fundamentally debilitating to our ability to move the agenda."

Within days, the furor went into remission. The *Post*, moving on, ran a story about Spitzer's appearance at a private fund-raiser in Greenwich Village. A witness told the *Post* Spitzer had declared that if the Democrats took the State Senate legalizing gay marriage would be one of his highest priorities. Spitzer denied it (he said he'd merely complimented the Assembly on its passage of a gay-marriage bill), but, sure enough, the Republicans picked up the gay-marriage drumbeat.

By last week, Spitzer seemed to have settled into a lumps-taking, amends-making phase—one as unfamiliar as it is likely to be short-lived. After meeting with a gathering of Democratic assemblymen, whom he'd asked for another chance, he told me, "It's like I am merely an object being moved, subject to poking, pushing, like an unknown in a science lab. Everyone's trying to push at you, figure out 'What is it?' "

"When I was a prosecutor, we had a much greater opportunity to reflect on every decision," he had said earlier. "The pace of decision-making and the range of decision-making was slower. And much more under control. You are, by and large, the actor who determines pace, timing, substance, et cetera. You control the pace of the game. In this job, a great deal comes at you, and so you're thrust into positions where you're reacting. And just the scale, obviously, makes it more likely that you're going to have decisions that go awry.

"I don't believe that at age forty-eight that you become, overnight, a transformed person," he said. "But is there a different sense of how we have to work with folks? Yes." ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Nick Paumgarten talks about Eliot Spitzer.

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE CHECKLIST

If something so simple can transform intensive care, what else can it do?

BY ATUL GAWANDE

The damage that the human body can survive these days is as awesome as it is horrible: crushing, burning, bombing, a burst blood vessel in the brain, a ruptured colon, a massive heart attack, rampaging infection. These conditions had once been uniformly fatal. Now survival is commonplace, and a large part of the credit goes to the irreplaceable component of medicine known as intensive care.

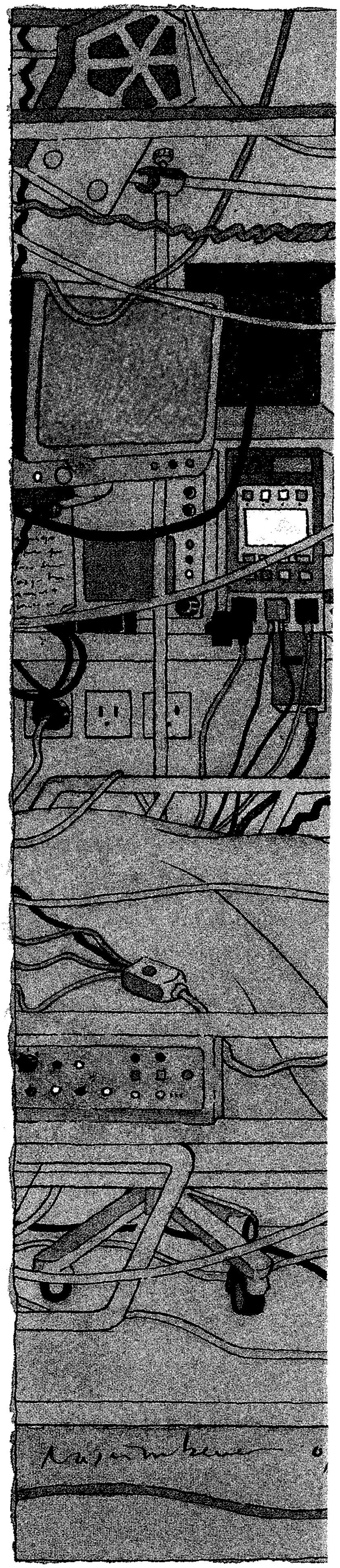
It's an opaque term. Specialists in the field prefer to call what they do "critical care," but that doesn't exactly clarify matters. The non-medical term "life support" gets us closer. Intensive-care units take artificial control of failing bodies. Typically, this involves a panoply of technology—a mechanical ventilator and perhaps a tracheostomy tube if the lungs have failed, an aortic balloon pump if the heart has given out, a dialysis machine if the kidneys don't work. When you are unconscious and can't eat, silicone tubing can be surgically inserted into the stomach or intestines for formula feeding. If the intestines are too damaged, solutions of amino acids, fatty acids, and glucose can be infused directly into the bloodstream.

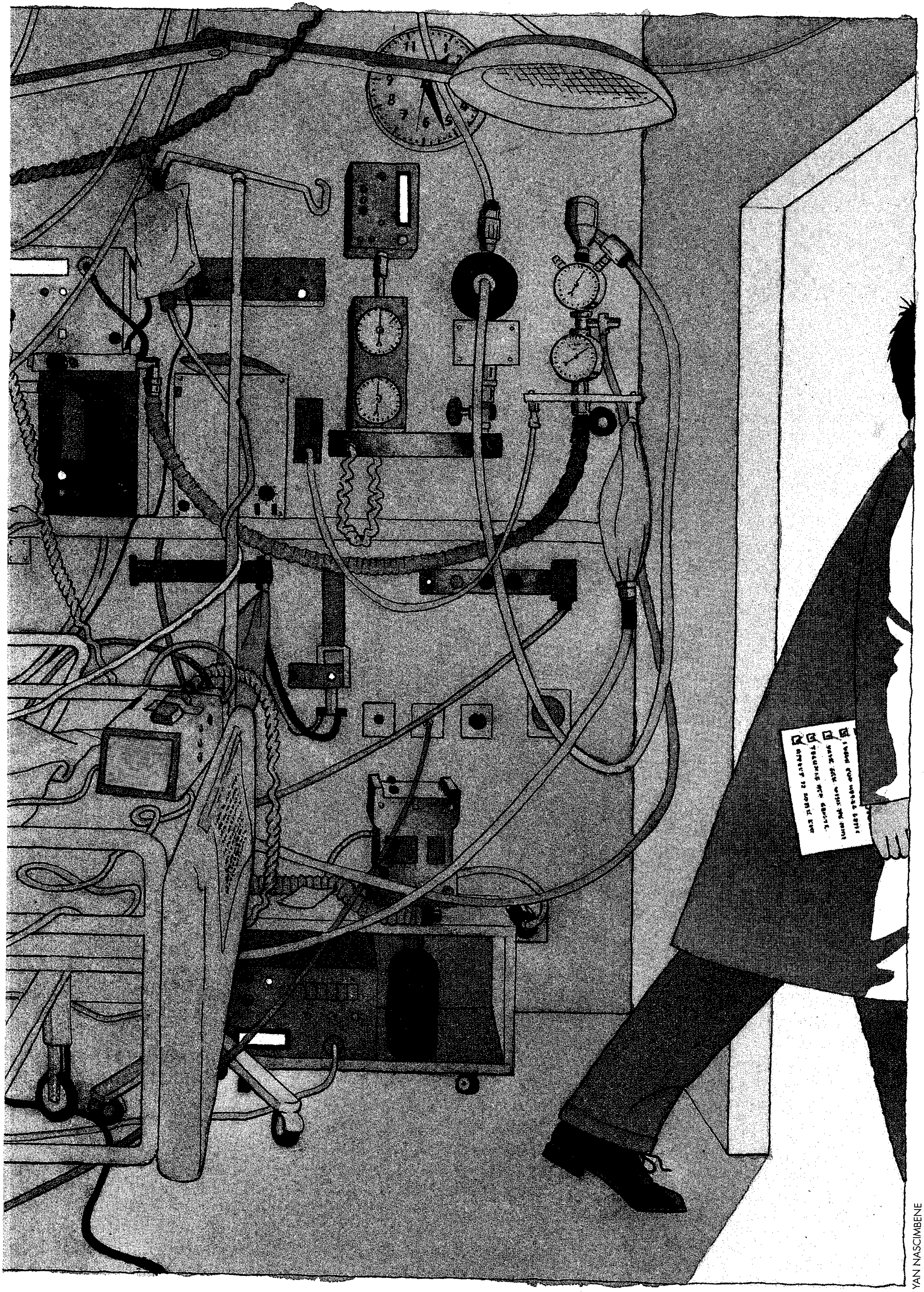
The difficulties of life support are considerable. Reviving a drowning victim, for example, is rarely as easy as it looks on television, where a few chest compressions and some mouth-to-mouth resuscitation always seem to bring someone with waterlogged lungs and a stilled heart coughing and sputtering back to life. Consider a case report in *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* of a three-year-old girl who fell into an icy fishpond in a small Austrian town in the Alps. She was lost beneath the surface for thirty minutes before her parents found her on the pond bottom and pulled her up. Following instructions from an emergency physician on the phone, they began cardiopulmonary resuscitation. A rescue team arrived eight minutes later. The girl had a body temperature of sixty-six degrees, and no pulse. Her pupils were dilated and did not react to light, indicating that her brain was no longer working.

But the emergency technicians continued CPR anyway. A helicopter took her to a nearby hospital, where she was wheeled directly to an operating room. A surgical team put her on a heart-lung bypass machine. Between the transport time and the time it took to plug the inflow and outflow lines into the femoral vessels of her right leg, she had been lifeless for an hour and a half. By the two-hour mark, however, her body temperature had risen almost ten degrees, and her heart began to beat. It was her first organ to come back.

After six hours, her core temperature reached 98.6 degrees. The team tried to put her on a breathing machine, but the pond water had damaged her lungs too severely for oxygen to reach her blood. So they switched her to an artificial-lung system known as ECMO—extracorporeal membrane oxygenation. The surgeons opened her chest down the middle with a power saw and sewed lines to and from the ECMO unit into her aorta and her beating heart. The team moved the girl into intensive care, with her chest still open and covered with plastic foil. A day later, her lungs had recovered sufficiently for the team to switch her from ECMO to a mechanical ventilator and close her chest. Over the next two days, all her organs recovered except her brain. A CT scan showed global brain swelling, which is a sign of diffuse damage, but no actual dead zones. So the team drilled a hole into the girl's skull, threaded in a probe to monitor her cerebral pressure, and kept that pressure

If a new drug were as effective at saving lives as Peter Pronovost's checklist, there would be a nationwide marketing campaign urging doctors to use it.





YAN NASCIMBENE

tightly controlled by constantly adjusting her fluids and medications. For more than a week, she lay comatose. Then, slowly, she came back to life.

First, her pupils started to react to light. Next, she began to breathe on her own. And, one day, she simply awoke. Two weeks after her accident, she went home. Her right leg and left arm were partially paralyzed. Her speech was thick and slurry. But by age five, after extensive outpatient therapy, she had recovered her faculties completely. She was like any little girl again.

What makes her recovery astounding isn't just the idea that someone could come back from two hours in a state that would once have been considered death. It's also the idea that a group of people in an ordinary hospital could do something so enormously complex. To save this one child, scores of people had to carry out thousands of steps correctly: placing the heart-pump tubing into her without letting in air bubbles; maintaining the sterility of her lines, her open chest, the burr hole in her skull; keeping a temperamental battery of machines up and running. The degree of difficulty in any one of these steps is substantial. Then you must add the difficulties of orchestrating them in the right sequence, with nothing dropped, leaving some room for improvisation, but not too much.

For every drowned and pulseless child rescued by intensive care, there are many more who don't make it—and not just because their bodies are too far gone. Machines break down; a team can't get moving fast enough; a simple step is forgotten. Such cases don't get written up in *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery*, but they are the norm. Intensive-care medicine has become the art of managing extreme complexity—and a test of whether such complexity can, in fact, be humanly mastered.

On any given day in the United States, some ninety thousand people are in intensive care. Over a year, an estimated five million Americans will be, and over a normal lifetime nearly all of us will come to know the glassed bay of an I.C.U. from the inside. Wide swaths of medicine now depend on the life-support systems that I.C.U.s provide: care for premature infants; victims of trauma, strokes, and heart attacks; patients who have had surgery on their brain, heart, lungs, or major blood vessels. Critical care has become an increasingly large portion of what hospitals do. Fifty years ago, I.C.U.s barely existed. Today, in my hospital, a hundred and fifty-five of our almost seven hundred patients are, as I write this, in intensive care. The average stay of an I.C.U. patient is four days, and the survival rate is eighty-six per cent. Going into an I.C.U., being put on a mechanical ventilator, having tubes and wires run into and out of you, is not a sentence of death. But the days will be the most precarious of your life.

A decade ago, Israeli scientists published a study in which engineers observed patient care in I.C.U.s for twenty-four-hour stretches. They found that the average patient required a hundred and seventy-eight individual actions per day, ranging from administering a drug to suctioning the lungs, and every one of them posed risks. Remarkably, the nurses and doctors were observed to make an error in just one per cent of these actions—but that still amounted to an average of two errors a day with every patient. Intensive care succeeds only when we hold the odds of doing harm low enough for the odds of doing good to prevail. This is hard. There are dangers simply in lying unconscious in bed for a few days. Muscles atrophy. Bones lose mass. Pressure ulcers form. Veins begin to clot off. You have to stretch and exercise patients' flaccid limbs daily to avoid contractures, give subcutaneous injections of blood thinners at least twice a day, turn patients in bed every few hours, bathe them and change their sheets without knocking out a tube or a line, brush their teeth twice a day to avoid pneumonia from bacterial buildup in their mouths. Add a ventilator, dialysis, and open wounds to care for, and the difficulties only accumulate.

The story of one of my patients makes the point. Anthony DeFilippo was a forty-eight-year-old limousine driver from Everett, Massachusetts, who started to hemorrhage at a community hospital during surgery for a hernia and gallstones. The bleeding was finally stopped but his liver was severely damaged, and over the next few days he became too sick for the hospital's facilities. When he arrived in our I.C.U., at 1:30 A.M. on a Sunday, his ragged black hair was plastered to his sweaty forehead, his body was shaking, and his heart was racing at a hundred and fourteen beats a minute. He was delirious from fever, shock, and low oxygen levels.

"I need to get out!" he cried. "I need to get out!" He clawed at his gown, his oxygen mask, the dressings covering his abdominal wound.

"Tony, it's all right," a nurse said to him. "We're going to help you. You're in a hospital."

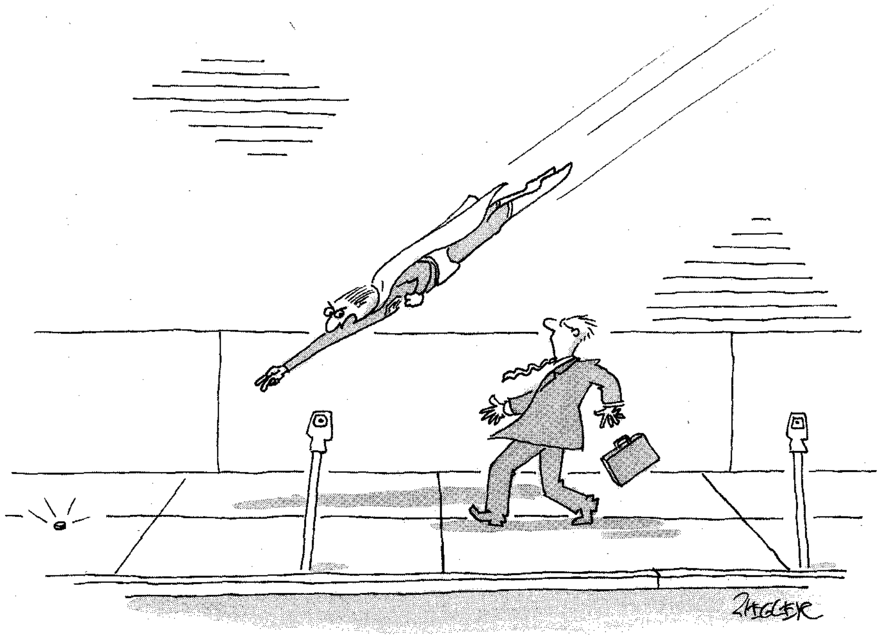
He shoved her—he was a big man—and tried to swing his legs out of the bed. We turned up his oxygen flow, put his wrists in cloth restraints, and tried to reason with him. He eventually let us draw blood from him and give him antibiotics.

The laboratory results came back showing liver failure, and a wildly elevated white-blood-cell count indicating infection. It soon became evident from his empty urine bag that his kidneys had failed, too. In the next few hours, his blood pressure fell, his breathing worsened, and he drifted from agitation to near-unconsciousness. Each of his organ systems, including his brain, was shutting down.

I called his sister, who was his next of kin, and told her of the situation. "Do everything you can," she said.

So we did. We gave him a syringeful of anesthetic, and a resident slid a breathing tube into his throat. Another resident "lined him up." She inserted a thin, two-inch-long needle and catheter through his upturned right wrist and into his radial artery, and then sewed the line to his skin with a silk suture. Next, she put in a central line—a twelve-inch catheter pushed into the jugular vein in his left neck. After she sewed that in place, and an X-ray showed its tip floating just where it was supposed to—inside his vena cava at the entrance to his heart—she put a third, slightly thicker line, for dialysis, through his right upper chest and into the subclavian vein, deep under the collarbone.

We hooked a breathing tube up to a hose from a ventilator and set it to give him fourteen forced breaths of a hundred-per-cent oxygen every minute. We dialled the ventilator pressures and gas flow up and down, like engineers at a



"Findsies!"

control panel, until we got the blood levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide where we wanted them. The arterial line gave us continuous arterial blood-pressure measurements, and we tweaked his medications to get the pressures we liked. We regulated his intravenous fluids according to venous-pressure measurements from his jugular line. We plugged his subclavian line into tubing from a dialysis machine, and every few minutes his entire blood volume washed through this artificial kidney and back into his body; a little adjustment here and there, and we could alter the levels of potassium and bicarbonate and salt in his body as well. He was, we liked to imagine, a simple machine in our hands.

But he wasn't, of course. It was as if we had gained a steering wheel and a few gauges and controls, but on a runaway eighteen-wheeler hurtling down a mountain. Keeping his blood pressure normal was requiring gallons of intravenous fluid and a pharmacy shelf of drugs. He was on near-maximal ventilator support. His temperature climbed to a hundred and four degrees. Less than five per cent of patients with his degree of organ failure make it home. And a single misstep could easily erase those slender chances.

For ten days, though, all went well. His chief problem had been liver damage from the operation he'd had. The main duct from his liver was severed and was leaking bile, which is caustic—it digests the fat in one's diet and was essentially eating him alive from the inside. He had become too sick to survive an operation to repair the leak. So we tried a temporary solution—we had radiologists place a plastic drain, using X-ray guidance, through his abdominal wall and into the severed duct in order to draw the leaking bile out of him. They found so much that they had to place three drains—one inside the duct and two around it. But, as the bile drained out, his fevers subsided. His requirements for oxygen and fluids diminished. His blood pressure returned to normal. He was on the mend. Then, on the eleventh day, just as we were getting ready to take him off the mechanical ventilator, he developed high, spiking fevers, his blood pressure sank, and his blood-oxygen levels plummeted again. His skin became clammy. He got shaking chills.

We didn't understand what had happened. He seemed to have developed an infection, but our X-rays and CT scans failed to turn up a source. Even after we put him on four antibiotics, he continued to spike fevers. During one fever, his heart went into fibrillation. A Code Blue was called. A dozen nurses and doctors raced to his bedside, slapped electric paddles onto his chest, and shocked him. His heart responded, fortunately, and went back into rhythm. It took two more days for us to figure out what had gone wrong. We considered the possibility that one of his lines had become infected, so we put in new lines and sent the old ones to the lab for culturing. Forty-eight hours later, the results returned: *all* of them were infected. The infection had probably started in one line, perhaps contaminated during insertion, and spread through his bloodstream to the others. Then they all began spilling bacteria into him, producing his fevers and steep decline.

This is the reality of intensive care: at any point, we are as apt to harm as we are to heal. Line infections are so common that they are considered a routine complication. I.C.U.s put five million lines into patients each year, and national statistics show that, after ten days, four per cent of those lines become infected. Line infections occur in eighty thousand people a year in the United States, and are fatal between five and twenty-eight per cent of the time, depending on how sick one is at the start. Those who survive line infections spend on average a week longer in intensive care. And this is just one of many risks. After ten days with a urinary catheter, four per cent of American I.C.U. patients develop a bladder infection. After ten days on a ventilator, six per cent develop bacterial pneumonia, resulting in death forty to fifty-five per cent of the time. All in all, about half of I.C.U. patients end up experiencing a serious complication, and, once a complication occurs, the chances of survival drop sharply.

It was a week before DeFilippo recovered sufficiently from his infections to come off the ventilator, and it was two months before he left the hospital. Weak and debilitated, he lost his limousine business and his home, and he had to move in with his sister. The tube draining bile still dangled from his abdomen; when he was stronger, I was going to have to do surgery to reconstruct the main bile duct from his liver. But he survived. Most people in his situation do not.

Here, then, is the puzzle of I.C.U. care: you have a desperately sick patient, and in order to have a chance of saving him you have to make sure that a hundred and seventy-eight daily tasks are done right—despite some monitor's alarm going off for God knows what reason, despite the patient in the next bed crashing, despite a nurse poking his head around the curtain to ask whether someone could help "get this lady's chest open." So how do you actually manage all this complexity? The solution that the medical profession has favored is specialization.

I tell DeFilippo's story, for instance, as if I were the one tending to him hour by hour. But that was actually Max Weinmann, an intensivist (as intensive-care specialists like to be called). I want to think that, as a general surgeon, I can handle most clinical situations. But, as the intricacies involved in intensive care have mounted, responsibility has increasingly shifted to super-specialists like him. In the past decade, training programs focussed on critical care have opened in every major American city, and half of I.C.U.s now rely on super-specialists.

Expertise is the mantra of modern medicine. In the early twentieth century, you needed only a high-school diploma and a one-year medical degree to practice medicine. By the century's end, all doctors had to have a college degree, a four-year medical degree, and an additional three to seven years of residency training in an individual field of practice—pediatrics, surgery, neurology, or the like. Already, though, this level of preparation has seemed inadequate to the new complexity of medicine. After their residencies, most young doctors today are going on to do fellowships, adding one to three further years of training in, say, laparoscopic surgery, or pediatric metabolic disorders, or breast radiology—or critical care. A young doctor is not so young nowadays; you typically don't start in independent practice until your mid-thirties.

We now live in the era of the super-specialist—of clinicians who have taken the time to practice at one narrow thing until they can do it better than anyone who hasn't. Super-specialists have two advantages over ordinary specialists: greater knowledge of the details that matter and an ability to handle the complexities of the job. There are degrees of complexity, though, and intensive-care medicine has grown so far beyond ordinary complexity that avoiding daily mistakes is proving impossible even for our super-specialists. The I.C.U., with its spectacular successes and frequent failures, therefore poses a distinctive challenge: what do you do when expertise is not enough?

PICNIC BY THE INLAND SEA

We understood we were hurtling into space
at eighteen miles per second, clouds of atoms
charged and polarized, each alone
in the abyss, and you wore your summer dress.
The light under the poplar was mottled
but the shade of the pines was feathered.
We were bundles of self-cancelling voices—
flight and response, punishment and reward,
hostile adoration, panic and certainty—
from long before the Bronze Age,
yet we made our own promises
by suppressed coughs or sneezes
and sat a little apart
but sometimes our eyes brushed.
We sipped Montepulciano from a paper cup
until the bottom darkened
but still it was not evening,
still the world was ending,
already we resented the breeze
for choosing and marking us,
still a song too short to sing
moved two famished sparrows
like pawns from branch to branch.

—D. Nurkse

On October 30, 1935, at Wright Air Field in Dayton, Ohio, the U.S. Army Air Corps held a flight competition for airplane manufacturers vying to build its next-generation long-range bomber. It wasn't supposed to be much of a competition. In early evaluations, the Boeing Corporation's gleaming aluminum-alloy Model 299 had trounced the designs of Martin and Douglas. Boeing's plane could carry five times as many bombs as the Army had requested; it could fly faster than previous bombers, and almost twice as far. A Seattle newspaperman who had glimpsed the plane called it the "flying fortress," and the name stuck. The flight "competition," according to the military historian Phillip Meilinger, was regarded as a mere formality. The Army planned to order at least sixty-five of the aircraft.

A small crowd of Army brass and manufacturing executives watched as the Model 299 test plane taxied onto the runway. It was sleek and impressive, with a hundred-and-three-foot wingspan and four engines jutting out from the wings, rather than the usual two. The plane roared down the tarmac, lifted off smoothly, and climbed sharply to three hundred feet. Then it stalled, turned on one wing, and crashed in a fiery explosion. Two of the five crew members died, including the pilot, Major Ployer P. Hill.

An investigation revealed that nothing mechanical had gone wrong. The crash had been due to "pilot error," the report said. Substantially more complex than previous aircraft, the new plane required the pilot to attend to the four engines, a retractable landing gear, new wing flaps, electric trim tabs that needed adjustment to maintain control at different airspeeds, and constant-speed propellers whose pitch had to be regulated with hydraulic controls, among other features. While doing all this, Hill had forgotten to release a new locking mechanism on the elevator and rudder controls. The Boeing model was deemed, as a newspaper put it, "too much airplane for one man to fly." The Army Air Corps declared Douglas's smaller design the winner. Boeing nearly went bankrupt.

Still, the Army purchased a few aircraft from Boeing as test planes, and some insiders remained convinced that the aircraft was flyable. So a group of test pilots got together and considered what to do.

They could have required Model 299 pilots to undergo more training. But it was hard to imagine having more experience and expertise than Major Hill, who had been the U.S. Army Air Corps' chief of flight testing. Instead, they came up with an ingeniously simple approach: they created a pilot's checklist, with step-by-step checks for takeoff, flight, landing, and taxiing. Its mere existence indicated how far aeronautics had advanced. In the early years of flight, getting an aircraft into the air might have been nerve-racking, but it was hardly complex. Using a checklist for takeoff would no more have occurred to a pilot than to a driver backing a car out of the garage. But this new plane was too complicated to be left to the memory of any pilot, however expert.

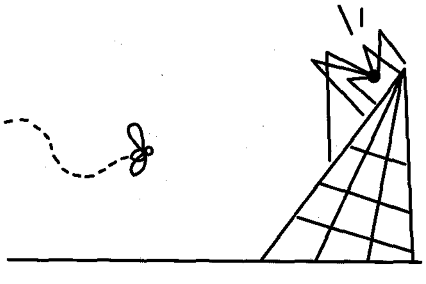
With the checklist in hand, the pilots went on to fly the Model 299 a total of 1.8 million miles without one accident. The Army ultimately ordered almost thirteen thousand of the aircraft, which it dubbed the B-17. And, because flying the behemoth was now possible, the Army gained a decisive air advantage in the Second World War which enabled its devastating bombing campaign across Nazi Germany.

Medicine today has entered its B-17 phase. Substantial parts of what hospitals do—most notably, intensive care—are now too complex for clinicians to carry them out reliably from memory alone. I.C.U. life support has become too much medicine for one person to fly.

Yet it's far from obvious that something as simple as a checklist could be of much help in medical care. Sick people are phenomenally more various than airplanes. A study of forty-one thousand trauma patients—just trauma patients—found that they had 1,224 different injury-related diagnoses in 32,261 unique combinations for teams to attend to. That's like having 32,261 kinds of airplane to land. Mapping out the proper steps for each is not possible, and physicians have been skeptical that a piece of paper with a bunch of little boxes would improve matters much.

In 2001, though, a critical-care specialist at Johns Hopkins Hospital named Peter Pronovost decided to give it a try. He didn't attempt to make the checklist cover everything; he designed it to tackle just one problem, the one that nearly killed Anthony DeFilippo: line infections. On a sheet of plain paper, he plotted out the steps to take in order to avoid infections when putting a line in. Doctors are supposed to (1) wash their hands with soap, (2) clean the patient's skin with chlorhexidine antiseptic, (3) put sterile drapes over the entire patient, (4) wear a sterile mask, hat, gown, and gloves, and (5) put a sterile dressing over the catheter site once the line is in. Check, check, check, check, check. These steps are no-brainers; they have been known and taught for years. So it seemed silly to make a checklist just for them. Still, Pronovost asked the nurses in his I.C.U. to observe the doctors for a month as they put lines into patients, and record how often they completed each step. In more than a third of patients, they skipped at least one.

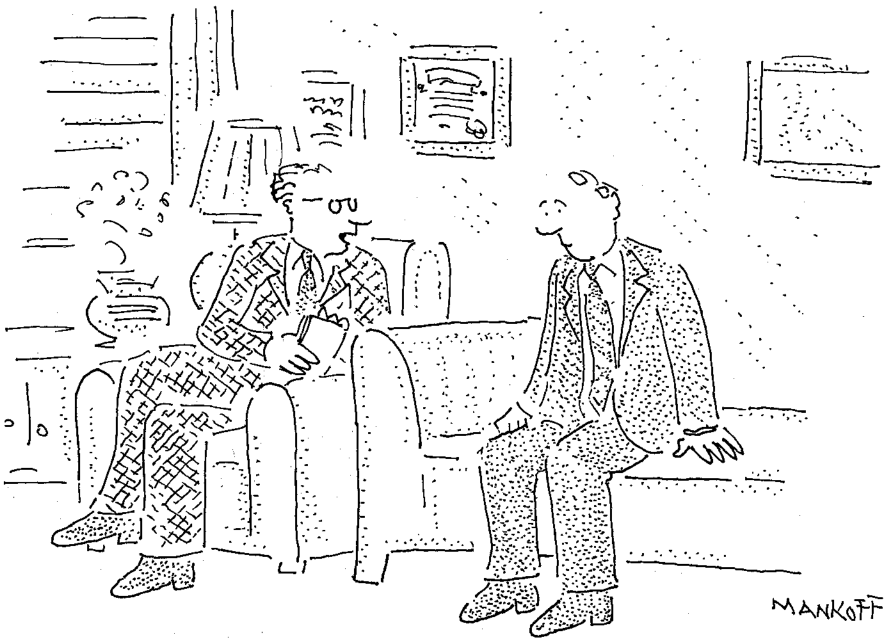
The next month, he and his team persuaded the hospital administration to authorize nurses to stop doctors if they saw them skipping a step on the checklist; nurses were also to ask them each day whether any lines ought to be removed, so as not to leave them in longer than necessary. This was revolutionary. Nurses have always had their ways of nudging a doctor into doing the right thing, ranging from the gentle reminder ("Um, did you forget to put on your mask, doctor?") to more forceful methods (I've had a nurse bodycheck me when she thought I hadn't put enough drapes on a patient). But many nurses aren't sure whether this is their place, or whether a given step is worth a confrontation. (Does it really matter whether a patient's legs are draped for a line going into the chest?) The new rule made it clear: if doctors didn't follow every step on the checklist, the nurses would have backup from the administration to intervene.



Pronovost and his colleagues monitored what happened for a year afterward. The results were so dramatic that they weren't sure whether to believe them: the ten-day line-infection rate went from eleven per cent to zero. So they followed patients for fifteen more months. Only two line infections occurred during the entire period. They calculated that, in this one hospital, the checklist had prevented forty-three infections and eight deaths, and saved two million dollars in costs.

Pronovost recruited some more colleagues, and they made some more checklists. One aimed to insure that nurses observe patients for pain at least once every four hours and provide timely pain medication. This reduced the likelihood of a patient's experiencing untreated pain from forty-one per cent to three per cent. They tested a checklist for patients on mechanical ventilation, making sure that, for instance, the head of each patient's bed was propped up at least thirty degrees so that oral secretions couldn't go into the windpipe, and antacid medication was given to prevent stomach ulcers. The proportion of patients who didn't receive the recommended care dropped from seventy per cent to four per cent; the occurrence of pneumonias fell by a quarter; and twenty-one fewer patients died than in the previous year. The researchers found that simply having the doctors and nurses in the I.C.U. make their own checklists for what they thought should be done each day improved the consistency of care to the point that, within a few weeks, the average length of patient stay in intensive care dropped by half.

The checklists provided two main benefits, Pronovost observed. First, they helped with memory recall, especially with mundane matters that are easily overlooked in patients undergoing more drastic events. (When you're worrying about what treatment to give a woman who won't stop seizing, it's hard to remember to make sure that the head of her bed is in the right position.) A second effect was to make explicit the minimum, expected steps in complex pro-



"Look, making you happy is out of the question, but I can give you a compelling narrative for your misery."

• •

cesses. Pronovost was surprised to discover how often even experienced personnel failed to grasp the importance of certain precautions. In a survey of I.C.U. staff taken before introducing the ventilator checklists, he found that half hadn't realized that there was evidence strongly supporting giving ventilated patients antacid medication. Checklists established a higher standard of baseline performance.

These are, of course, ridiculously primitive insights. Pronovost is routinely described by colleagues as "brilliant," "inspiring," a "genius." He has an M.D. and a Ph.D. in public health from Johns Hopkins, and is trained in emergency medicine, anesthesiology, and critical-care medicine. But, really, does it take all that to figure out what house movers, wedding planners, and tax accountants figured out ages ago?

Pronovost is hardly the first person in medicine to use a checklist. But he is among the first to recognize its power to save lives and take advantage of the breadth of its possibilities. Forty-two years old, with cropped light-brown hair, tenth-grader looks, and a fluttering, finchlike energy, he is an odd mixture of the nerdy and the messianic. He grew up in Waterbury, Connecticut, the son of an elementary-school teacher and a math professor, went to nearby Fairfield University, and, like many good students, decided that he would go into medicine. Unlike many students, though, he found that he actually liked caring for sick people. He hated the laboratory—with all those micropipettes and cell cultures, and no patients around—but he had that scientific "How can I solve this unsolved problem?" turn of mind. So after his residency in anesthesiology and his fellowship in critical care, he studied clinical-research methods.

For his doctoral thesis, he examined intensive-care units in Maryland, and he discovered that putting an intensivist on staff reduced death rates by a third. It was the first time that someone had demonstrated the public-health value of using intensivists. He wasn't satisfied with having proved his case, though; he wanted hospitals to change accordingly. After his study was published, in 1999, he met with a coalition of large employers known as the Leapfrog Group. It included companies like General Motors and Verizon, which were seeking to improve the standards of hospitals where their employees obtain care. Within weeks, the coalition announced that its members expected the hospitals they contracted with to staff their I.C.U.s with intensivists. These employers pay for health care for thirty-seven million employees, retirees, and dependents nationwide. So although hospitals protested that there weren't enough intensivists to go around, and that the cost could be prohibitive, Pronovost's idea effectively became an instant national standard.

The scientist in him has always made room for the campaigner. People say he is the kind of guy who, even as a trainee, could make you feel you'd saved the world every time you washed your hands properly. "I've never seen anybody inspire as he does," Marty Makary, a Johns Hopkins surgeon, told me. "Partly, he has this contagious, excitable nature. He has a smile that's tough to match. But he also has a way of making people feel heard. People will come to him with the dumbest ideas, and he'll endorse them anyway. 'Oh, I like that, I like that, I like that!' he'll say. I've watched him, and I still have no idea how deliberate this is. Maybe he really does like every idea. But wait, and you realize: he only acts on the ones he truly believes in."

After the checklist results, the idea Pronovost truly believed in was that checklists could save enormous numbers of lives. He took his findings on the road, showing his checklists to doctors, nurses, insurers, employers—anyone who would listen. He spoke in an average of seven cities a month while continuing to work full time in Johns Hopkins's I.C.U.s. But this time he found few takers.

There were various reasons. Some physicians were offended by the suggestion that they needed checklists. Others had legitimate doubts about Pronovost's evidence. So far, he'd shown only that checklists worked in one hospital, Johns Hopkins, where the I.C.U.s have money, plenty of staff, and Peter Pronovost walking the hallways to make sure that the checklists are being used properly. How about in the real world—where I.C.U. nurses and doctors are in short supply, pressed for time, overwhelmed with patients, and hardly receptive to the idea of filling out yet another piece of paper?

In 2003, however, the Michigan Health and Hospital Association asked Pronovost to try out three of his checklists in Michigan's I.C.U.s. It would be a huge undertaking. Not only would he have to get the state's hospitals to use the checklists; he would also have to measure whether doing so made a genuine difference. But at last Pronovost had a chance to establish whether his checklist idea really worked.

This past summer, I visited Sinai-Grace Hospital, in inner-city Detroit, and saw what Pronovost was up against. Occupying a campus of red brick buildings amid abandoned houses, check-cashing stores, and wig shops on the city's West Side, just south of 8 Mile Road, Sinai-Grace is a classic urban hospital. It has eight hundred physicians, seven hundred nurses, and two thousand other medical personnel to care for a population with the lowest median income of any city in the country. More than a quarter of a million residents are uninsured; three hundred thousand are on state assistance. That has meant chronic financial problems. Sinai-Grace is not the most cash-strapped hospital in the city—that would be Detroit Receiving Hospital, where a fifth of the patients have no means of payment. But between 2000 and 2003 Sinai-Grace and eight other Detroit hospitals were forced to cut a third of their staff, and the state had to come forward with a fifty-million-dollar bailout to avert their bankruptcy.

Sinai-Grace has five I.C.U.s for adult patients and one for infants. Hassan Makki, the director of intensive care, told me what it was like there in 2004, when Pronovost and the hospital association started a series of mailings and conference calls with hospitals to introduce checklists for central lines and ventilator patients. "Morale was low," he said. "We had lost lots of staff, and the nurses who remained weren't sure if they were staying." Many doctors were thinking about leaving, too. Meanwhile, the teams faced an even heavier workload because of new rules limiting how long the residents could work at a stretch. Now Pronovost was telling them to find the time to fill out some daily checklists?

Tom Piskorowski, one of the I.C.U. physicians, told me his reaction: "Forget the paperwork. Take care of the patient."

I accompanied a team on 7 A.M. rounds through one of the surgical I.C.U.s. It had eleven patients. Four had gunshot wounds (one had been shot in the chest; one had been shot through the bowel, kidney, and liver; two had been shot through the neck, and left quadriplegic). Five patients had cerebral hemorrhaging (three were seventy-nine years and older and had been injured falling down stairs; one was a middle-aged man whose skull and left temporal lobe had been damaged by an assault with a blunt weapon; and one was a worker who had become paralyzed from the neck down after falling twenty-five feet off a ladder onto his head). There was a cancer patient recovering from surgery to remove part of his lung, and a patient who had had surgery to repair a cerebral aneurysm.

The doctors and nurses on rounds tried to proceed methodically from one room to the next but were constantly interrupted: a patient they thought they'd stabilized began hemorrhaging again; another who had been taken off the ventilator developed trouble breathing and had to be put back on the machine. It was hard to imagine that they could get their heads far enough above the daily tide of disasters to worry about the minutiae on some checklist.

Yet there they were, I discovered, filling out those pages. Mostly, it was the nurses who kept things in order. Each morning, a senior nurse walked through the unit, clipboard in hand, making sure that every patient on a ventilator had the bed propped at the right angle, and had been given the right medicines and the right tests. Whenever doctors put in a central line, a nurse made sure that the central-line checklist had been filled out and placed in the patient's chart. Looking back through their files, I found that they had been doing this faithfully for more than three years.

Pronovost had been canny when he started. In his first conversations with hospital administrators, he didn't order them to use the checklists. Instead, he asked them simply to gather data on their own infection rates. In early 2004, they found, the infection rates for I.C.U. patients in Michigan hospitals were higher than the national average, and in some hospitals dramatically so. Sinai-Grace experienced more line infections than seventy-five per cent of American hospitals. Meanwhile, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan agreed to give hospitals small bonus payments for participating in Pronovost's program. A checklist suddenly seemed an easy and logical thing to try.

In what became known as the Keystone Initiative, each hospital assigned a project manager to roll out the checklists and participate in a twice-monthly conference call with Pronovost for troubleshooting. Pronovost also insisted that each participating hospital assign to each unit a senior hospital executive, who would visit the unit at least once a month, hear people's complaints, and help them solve problems.

The executives were reluctant. They normally lived in meetings worrying about strategy and budgets. They weren't

"O.K., Cynthia. I'll tell you about my hopes and my dreams, my joys and my passions. But be forewarned—they all concern a particular sports team."

used to venturing into patient territory and didn't feel that they belonged there. In some places, they encountered hostility. But their involvement proved crucial. In the first month, according to Christine Goeschel, at the time the Keystone Initiative's director, the executives discovered that the chlorhexidine soap, shown to reduce line infections, was available in fewer than a third of the I.C.U.s. This was a problem only an executive could solve. Within weeks, every I.C.U. in Michigan had a supply of the soap. Teams also complained to the hospital officials that the checklist required that patients be fully covered with a sterile drape when lines were being put in, but full-size barrier drapes were often unavailable. So the officials made sure that the drapes were stocked. Then they persuaded Arrow International, one of the largest manufacturers of central lines, to produce a new central-line kit that had both the drape and chlorhexidine in it.

In December, 2006, the Keystone Initiative published its findings in a landmark article in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Within the first three months of the project, the infection rate in Michigan's I.C.U.s decreased by sixty-six per cent. The typical I.C.U.—including the ones at Sinai-Grace Hospital—cut its quarterly infection rate to zero. Michigan's infection rates fell so low that its average I.C.U. outperformed ninety per cent of I.C.U.s nationwide. In the Keystone Initiative's first eighteen months, the hospitals saved an estimated hundred and seventy-five million dollars in costs and more than fifteen hundred lives. The successes have been sustained for almost four years—all because of a stupid little checklist.

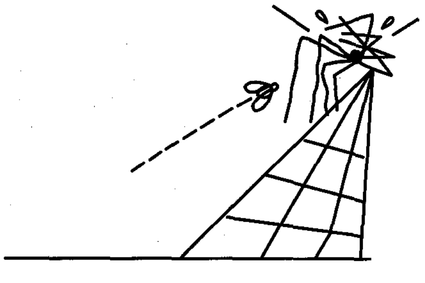
Pronovost's results have not been ignored. He has since had requests to help Rhode Island, New Jersey, and the country of Spain do what Michigan did. Back in the Wolverine State, he and the Keystone Initiative have begun testing half a dozen additional checklists to improve care for I.C.U. patients. He has also been asked to develop a program for surgery patients. It has all become more than he and his small group of researchers can keep up with.

But consider: there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of things doctors do that are at least as dangerous and prone to human failure as putting central lines into I.C.U. patients. It's true of cardiac care, stroke treatment, H.I.V. treatment, and surgery of all kinds. It's also true of diagnosis, whether one is trying to identify cancer or infection or a heart attack. All have steps that are worth putting on a checklist and testing in routine care. The question—still unanswered—is whether medical culture will embrace the opportunity.

Tom Wolfe's "The Right Stuff" tells the story of our first astronauts, and charts the demise of the maverick, Chuck Yeager test-pilot culture of the nineteen-fifties. It was a culture defined by how unbelievably dangerous the job was. Test pilots strapped themselves into machines of barely controlled power and complexity, and a quarter of them were killed on the job. The pilots had to have focus, daring, wits, and an ability to improvise—the right stuff. But as knowledge of how to control the risks of flying accumulated—as checklists and flight simulators became more prevalent and sophisticated—the danger diminished, values of safety and conscientiousness prevailed, and the rock-star status of the test pilots was gone.

Something like this is going on in medicine. We have the means to make some of the most complex and dangerous work we do—in surgery, emergency care, and I.C.U. medicine—more effective than we ever thought possible. But the prospect pushes against the traditional culture of medicine, with its central belief that in situations of high risk and complexity what you want is a kind of expert audacity—the right stuff, again. Checklists and standard operating procedures feel like exactly the opposite, and that's what rankles many people.

It's ludicrous, though, to suppose that checklists are going to do away with the need for courage, wits, and improvisation. The body is too intricate and individual for that: good medicine will not be able to dispense with expert audacity. Yet it should also be ready to accept the virtues of regimentation.



The still limited response to Pronovost's work may be easy to explain, but it is hard to justify. If someone found a new drug that could wipe out infections with anything remotely like the effectiveness of Pronovost's lists, there would be television ads with Robert Jarvik extolling its virtues, detail men offering free lunches to get doctors to make it part of their practice, government programs to research it, and competitors jumping in to make a newer, better version. That's what happened when manufacturers marketed central-line catheters coated with silver or other antimicrobials; they cost a third more, and reduced infections only slightly—and hospitals have spent tens of millions of dollars on them. But, with the checklist, what we have is Peter Pronovost trying to see if maybe, in the next year or two, hospitals in Rhode Island and New Jersey will give his idea a try.

Pronovost remains, in a way, an odd bird in medical research. He does not have the multimillion-dollar grants that his colleagues in bench science have. He has no swarm of doctoral students and lab animals. He's focussed on work that is not normally considered a significant contribution in academic medicine. As a result, few other researchers are venturing to extend his achievements. Yet his work has already saved more lives than that of any laboratory scientist in the past decade.

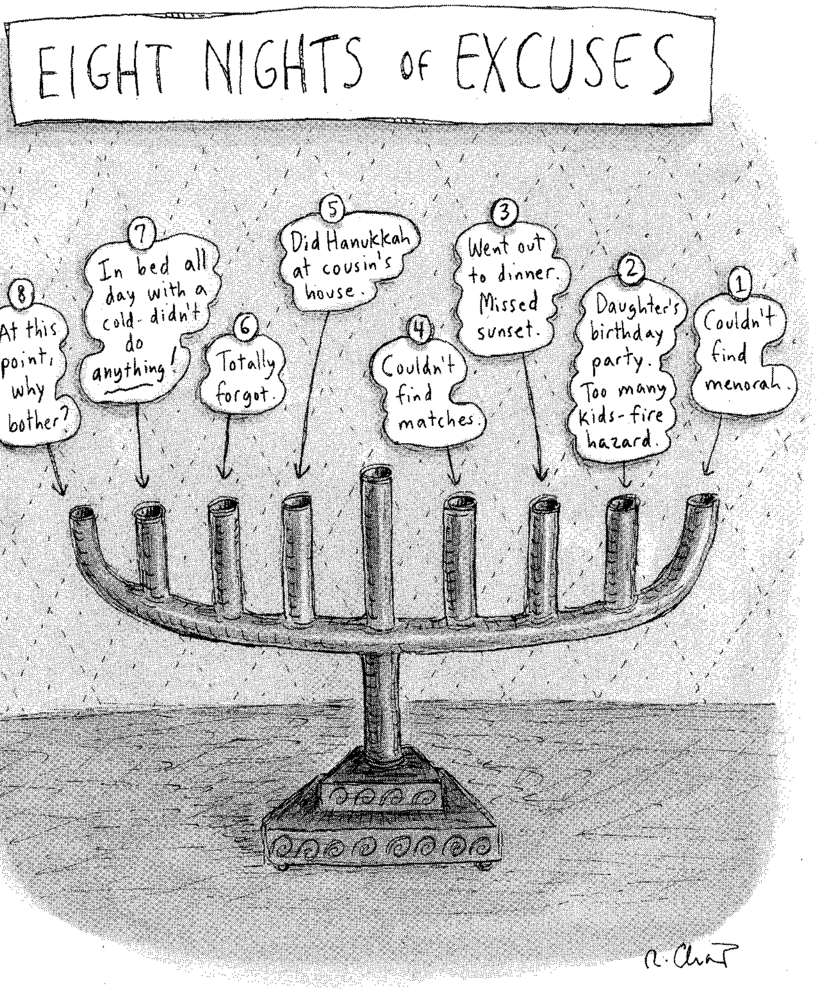
I called Pronovost recently at Johns Hopkins, where he was on duty in an I.C.U. I asked him how long it would be before the average doctor or nurse is as apt to have a checklist in hand as a stethoscope (which, unlike checklists, has never been proved to make a difference to patient care).

"At the current rate, it will never happen," he said, as monitors beeped in the background. "The fundamental problem with the quality of American medicine is that we've failed to view delivery of health care as a science. The tasks of medical science fall into three buckets. One is understanding disease biology. One is finding effective therapies. And one is insuring those therapies are delivered effectively. That third bucket has been almost totally ignored by research funders, government, and academia. It's viewed as the art of medicine. That's a mistake, a huge mistake. And from a taxpayer's perspective it's outrageous." We have a thirty-billion-dollar-a-year National Institutes of Health, he pointed out, which has been a remarkable powerhouse of discovery. But we have no billion-dollar National Institute of Health Care Delivery studying how best to incorporate those discoveries into daily practice.

I asked him how much it would cost for him to do for the whole country what he did for Michigan. About two million dollars, he said, maybe three, mostly for the technical work of signing up hospitals to participate state by state and coördinating a database to track the results. He's already devised a plan to do it in all of Spain for less.

"We could get I.C.U. checklists in use throughout the United States within two years, if the country wanted it," he said.

So far, it seems, we don't. The United States could have been the first to adopt medical checklists nationwide, but, instead, Spain will beat us. "I at least hope we're not the last," Pronovost said.


EIGHT NIGHTS OF EXCUSES
8 At this point, why bother?
7 In bed all day with a cold - didn't do anything!
6 Totally forgot.
5 Did Hanukkah at cousin's house.
4 Couldn't find matches.
3 Went out to dinner. Missed sunset.
2 Daughter's birthday party. Too many kids - fire hazard.
1 Couldn't find menorah.

Recently, I spoke to Markus Thalmann, the cardiac surgeon on the team that saved the little Austrian girl who had drowned, and learned that a checklist had been crucial to her survival. Thalmann had worked for six years at the city hospital in Klagenfurt, the small provincial capital in south Austria where the girl was resuscitated. She was not the first person whom he and his colleagues had tried to revive from cardiac arrest after hypothermia and suffocation. They received between three and five such patients a year, he estimated, mostly avalanche victims (Klagenfurt is surrounded by the Alps), some of them drowning victims, and a few of them people attempting suicide by taking a drug overdose and then wandering out into the snowy forests to fall unconscious.

For a long time, he said, no matter how hard the medical team tried, it had no survivors. Most of the victims had gone without a pulse and oxygen for too long by the time they were found. But some, he felt, still had a flicker of viability in them, and each time the team failed to sustain it.

Speed was the chief difficulty. Success required having an array of equipment and people at the ready—helicopter-rescue personnel, trauma surgeons, an experienced cardiac anesthesiologist and surgeon, bioengineering support staff, operating and critical-care nurses, intensivists. Too often, someone or something was missing. So he and a couple of colleagues made and distributed a checklist. In cases like these, the checklist said, rescue teams were to tell the hospital to prepare for possible cardiac bypass and rewarming. They were to call, when possible, even before they arrived on the scene, as the preparation time could be significant. The hospital would then work down a list of people to be notified. They would have an operating room set up and standing by.

The team had its first success with the checklist in place—the rescue of the three-year-old girl. Not long afterward, Thalmann left to take a job at a hospital in Vienna. The team, however, was able to make at least two other such rescues, he said. In one case, a man was found frozen and pulseless after a suicide attempt. In another, a mother and her sixteen-year-old daughter were in an accident that sent them and their car through a guardrail, over a cliff, and into a mountain river. The mother died on impact; the daughter was trapped as the car rapidly filled with icy water. She had been in cardiac and respiratory arrest for a prolonged period of time when the rescue team arrived.

From that point onward, though, the system went like clockwork. By the time the rescue team got to her and began CPR, the hospital had been notified. The transport team got her there in minutes. The surgical team took her straight to the operating room and crashed her onto heart-lung bypass. One step went right after another. And, because of the speed with which they did, she had a chance.

As the girl's body slowly rewarmed, her heart came back. In the I.C.U., a mechanical ventilator, fluids, and intravenous drugs kept her going while the rest of her body recovered. The next day, the doctors were able to remove her lines and tubes. The day after that, she was sitting up in bed, ready to go home. ♦

FICTION

FOUND OBJECTS

BY JENNIFER EGAN

It began the usual way, in the bathroom of the Lassimo Hotel. Sasha was adjusting her yellow eyeshadow in the mirror when she noticed a bag on the floor beside the sink that must have belonged to the woman whose peeing she could faintly hear through the vault-like door of a toilet stall. Inside the rim of the bag, barely visible, was a wallet made of pale-green leather. It was easy for Sasha to recognize, looking back, that the peeing woman's blind trust had provoked her: *I live in a city where people will steal the hair off your head if you give them half a chance, but you leave your stuff lying in plain sight and expect it to be waiting for you when you come back*? It made her want to teach the woman a lesson. But that wish only camouflaged the deeper feeling that Sasha always had: that fat, tender wallet, offering itself to her hand. It seemed so dull, so life-as-usual just to leave it there rather than seize the moment, accept the challenge, take the leap, fly the coop, throw caution to the wind, live dangerously ("I get it," Coz, her therapist, said), and *take* the fucking thing.

"You mean steal it."

He was trying to get Sasha to use that word, which was harder to avoid in the case of a wallet than with a lot of the things she'd lifted over the past year, when her condition (as Coz referred to it) had begun to accelerate: five sets of keys, fourteen pairs of sunglasses, a child's striped scarf, binoculars, a cheese grater, a pocket knife, twenty-eight bars of soap, eighty-five pens, ranging from cheap ballpoints she'd used to sign debit-card slips to the aubergine Visconti that cost two hundred and sixty dollars online, which she'd lifted from her former boss's lawyer during a contracts meeting. Sasha never took anything from stores—their cold, inert goods didn't tempt her. Only from people.

"O.K.," she said. "Steal it."

Sasha and Coz had dubbed that feeling she got the "personal challenge," as in: taking the wallet was a way for Sasha to assert her toughness, her individuality. What they needed to do was switch things around in her head so that the challenge became not taking the wallet but *leaving* it. That would be the cure, although Coz never used words like "cure." He wore funky sweaters and let her call him Coz, but he was old-school inscrutable, to the point where Sasha couldn't tell if he was gay or straight, if he'd written famous books or if (as she sometimes suspected) he was one of those escaped cons who impersonate surgeons and wind up leaving their operating tools inside people's skulls. Of course, these questions could have been resolved on Google in less than a minute, but they were useful questions (according to Coz), and, so far, Sasha had resisted.

The couch where she lay in his office was blue leather and very soft. Coz liked the couch, he'd told her, because it relieved them both of the burden of eye contact. "You don't like eye contact?" Sasha had asked. It had seemed like a weird thing for a therapist to admit.

"I find it tiring," he'd said. "This way, we can both look where we want."

"Where will you look?"

He smiled. "You can see my options."

"Where do you usually look? When people are on the couch."

"Around the room," Coz said. "At the ceiling. Into space."

"Do you ever sleep?"

"No."

Sasha usually looked at the window, which faced the street, and tonight, as she continued her story, was rippled with rain. She'd glimpsed the wallet, tender and overripe as a peach. She'd plucked it from the woman's bag and slipped it into her own small handbag, which she'd zipped shut even before the sound of peeing had stopped. She'd flicked open the bathroom door and floated back through the lobby to the bar. She and the wallet's owner had never seen each other.

Pre-wallet, Sasha had been in the grip of a dire evening: lame date (yet another) brooding behind dark bangs, sometimes glancing at the flat-screen TV, where a Jets game seemed to interest him more than Sasha's admittedly worn-out tales of Bennie Salazar, her old boss, who ran a record label and also (Sasha happened to know) sprinkled gold flakes into his coffee—as an aphrodisiac, she suspected—and sprayed pesticide in his armpits.

Post-wallet, however, the scene tingled with mirthful possibility. Sasha felt the waiters eying her as she sidled back to the table holding her handbag with its secret weight. She sat down and took a sip of her Melon Madness Martini and cocked her head at Alex. She smiled her yes/no smile: remote yet flirtatious, quizzical yet penetrating, a smile she could muster only at certain lucky times. "Hello," she said.

The yes/no smile was amazingly effective.

"You're happy," Alex said.

"I'm always happy," Sasha said. "Sometimes I just forget."

Alex had paid the bill while she was in the bathroom—clear proof that he'd been on the verge of aborting their date. Now he studied her. "You feel like going somewhere else?"

They stood. Alex wore black cords and a white button-down shirt. He was a legal secretary. On e-mail he'd been fanciful, almost goofy, but in person he seemed simultaneously anxious and bored. She could tell that he was in excellent shape, not because he went to the gym but because he was young enough that his body was still imprinted with whatever sports he'd played in high school and college. Sasha, who was thirty-five, had passed that point. Still, not even Coz knew her real age. The closest anyone had come to guessing it was thirty-one, and most put her in her twenties. She worked out daily and avoided the sun. Her online profiles all listed her as twenty-eight.

As Sasha followed Alex from the bar, she couldn't resist unzipping her purse and touching the fat green wallet just for a second, for the contraction it made her feel around her heart.

"You're aware of how the theft makes *you* feel," Coz said. "To the point where you remind yourself of it to improve your mood. But do you think about how it makes the other person feel?"

Sasha tipped back her head to look at him. She made a point of doing this now and then, just to remind Coz that she wasn't an idiot—she knew that the question had a right answer. She and Coz were collaborators, writing a story whose end had already been determined: she would get well. She would stop stealing from people and start caring again about the things that had once guided her: music, the network of friends she'd made when she first came to New York, a set of goals she'd scrawled on a

BASTIENNE SCHMIDT, "IMPACT STILLS" (2007)

big sheet of newsprint and taped to the walls of her early apartments.

Find a band to manage
Understand the news
Study Japanese
Learn the harp

"I don't think about the people," Sasha said.

"But it isn't that you lack empathy," Coz said. "We know that, because of the plumber."

Sasha sighed. She'd told Coz the plumber story about a month ago, and he'd found a way to bring it up at almost every session since. The plumber was an old man, sent by Sasha's landlord to investigate a leak in the apartment below hers. He'd appeared in Sasha's doorway, tufts of gray on his head, and within a minute—*boom*—he'd hit the floor and crawled under her bathtub like an animal fumbling its way into a familiar hole. The fingers he'd groped toward the bolts behind the tub were grimed to cigar stubs, and reaching made his sweatshirt hike up, exposing a soft white back. Sasha turned away, stricken by the old man's abasement, anxious to leave for her temp job, except that the plumber was talking to her, asking about the length and frequency of her showers. "I never use it," she told him curtly. "I shower at the gym." He nodded without acknowledging her rudeness, apparently used to it. Sasha's nose began to prickle; she shut her eyes and pushed hard on both temples.

Opening her eyes, she saw the plumber's tool belt lying on the floor at her feet. It had a beautiful screwdriver in it, the orange translucent handle gleaming like a lollipop in its worn leather loop, the silvery shaft sculpted, sparkling. Sasha felt herself contract around the object in a single yawn of appetite; she needed to hold the screwdriver, just for a minute. She bent her knees and plucked it noiselessly from the belt. Not a bangle jangled; her bony hands were spastic at most things, but she was good at this—*made for it*, she often thought, in the first drifty moments after lifting something. And, once the screwdriver was in her hand, she felt instant relief from the pain of having an old soft-backed man snuffling under her tub, and then something more than relief: a blessed indifference, as if the very idea of feeling pain over such a thing were baffling.

"And what about after he'd gone?" Coz had asked when Sasha told him the story. "How did the screwdriver look to you then?"

There was a pause. "Normal," she said.

"Really? Not special anymore?"

"Like any screwdriver."

Sasha had heard Coz shift behind her and felt something happen in the room: the screwdriver, which she'd placed on the table (recently supplemented with a second table) where she kept the things she'd lifted, and which she'd barely looked at since, seemed to hang in the air of Coz's office. It floated between them: a symbol.

"And how did you feel," Coz asked quietly, "about having taken it from the plumber you pitied?"

How did she feel? *How did she feel*? There was a right answer, of course. At times, Sasha had to fight the urge to lie simply as a way of depriving Coz of it.

"Bad," she said. "O.K.? I felt bad. Shit, I'm bankrupting myself to pay for you—obviously I get that this isn't a great way to live."

More than once, Coz had tried to connect the plumber to Sasha's father, who had disappeared when she was six. She was careful not to indulge this line of thinking. "I don't remember him," she told Coz. "I have nothing to say." She did this for Coz's protection and her own—they were writing a story of redemption, of fresh beginnings and second chances. But in that direction lay only sorrow.

Sasha and Alex crossed the lobby of the Lassimo Hotel. Sasha hugged her purse to her shoulder, the warm ball of wallet snuggled in her armpit. As they passed the angular budded branches by the big glass doors to the street, a woman zigzagged into their path. "Wait," she said. "You haven't seen—I'm desperate."

Sasha felt a twang of terror. It was the woman whose wallet she'd taken—she knew this instantly, although the person before her had nothing in common with the blithe, raven-haired wallet owner she'd pictured. This woman had vulnerable brown eyes and flat pointy shoes that clicked too loudly on the marble floor. There was plenty of gray in her frizzy brown hair.

Sasha took Alex's arm, trying to steer him through the doors. She felt his pulse of surprise at her touch, but he stayed put. "Have we seen what?" he said.

"Someone stole my wallet. My ID is gone, and I have to catch a plane tomorrow morning. I'm just desperate!" She stared beseechingly at both of them. It was the sort of frank need that New Yorkers quickly learn how to hide, and Sasha recoiled. It had never occurred to her that the woman was from out of town.

"Have you called the police?" Alex asked.

"The concierge said he would call. But I'm also wondering—could it have fallen out somewhere?" She looked helplessly at the floor around their feet. Sasha relaxed slightly. This woman was the type who annoyed people without meaning to; apology shadowed her movements even now, as she followed Alex to the concierge's desk. Sasha trailed behind.

"Is someone helping this person?" she heard Alex ask.

The concierge was young and spiky-haired. "We've called the police," he said defensively.

Alex turned to the woman. "Where did this happen?"

"In the ladies' room. I think."

"Who else was there?"

"No one."

"It was empty?"

"There might have been someone, but I didn't see her."

Alex swung around to Sasha. "You were just in the bathroom," he said. "Did you see anyone?"

"No," she managed to say. She had some Xanax in her purse, but she couldn't open her purse. Even with it zipped, she feared that the wallet would blurt into view in some way that she couldn't control, unleashing a cascade of horrors: arrest, shame, poverty, death.

Alex turned to the concierge. "How come I'm asking these questions instead of you?" he said. "Someone just got robbed in your hotel. Don't you have, like, security?"

The words "robbed" and "security" managed to pierce the soothing back-beat that pumped through not just the Lassimo but every hotel like it in New York. There was a mild ripple of interest from the lobby.

“I’ve called security,” the concierge said, adjusting his neck. “I’ll call them again.”

Sasha glanced at Alex. He was angry, and the anger made him recognizable in a way that an hour of aimless chatter (mostly hers, it was true) had not: he was new to New York. He came from someplace smaller. He had a thing or two to prove about how people should treat one another.

Two security guys showed up, the same on TV and in life: beefy guys whose scrupulous politeness was somehow linked to their willingness to crack skulls. They dispersed to search the bar. Sasha wished feverishly that she’d left the wallet there, as if this were an impulse she’d barely resisted.

“I’ll check the bathroom,” she told Alex, and forced herself to walk slowly around the elevator bank. The bathroom was empty. Sasha opened her purse, took out the wallet, unearthed her vial of Xanax, and popped one between her teeth. They worked faster if you chewed them. As the caustic taste flooded her mouth, she scanned the room, trying to decide where to ditch the wallet. In the stall? Under the sink? The decision paralyzed her. She had to do this right, to emerge unscathed, and if she could, if she did—she had a frenzied sense of making a promise to Coz.

The bathroom door opened, and the woman walked in. Her frantic eyes met Sasha’s in the bathroom mirror: narrow, green, equally frantic. There was a pause, during which Sasha felt that she was being confronted; the woman knew, had known all along. Sasha handed her the wallet. She saw, from the woman’s stunned expression, that she was wrong.

“I’m sorry,” Sasha said quickly. “It’s a problem I have.”

The woman opened the wallet. Her physical relief at having it back coursed through Sasha in a warm rush, as if their bodies had fused. “Everything’s there, I swear,” she said. “I didn’t even open it. It’s this problem I have, but I’m getting help. I just—please don’t tell. I’m hanging on by a thread.”

The woman glanced up, her soft brown eyes moving over Sasha’s face. What did she see? Sasha wished that she could turn and peer in the mirror again, as if something about herself might at last be revealed—some lost thing. But she didn’t turn. She held still and let the woman look. It struck her that the woman was close to her own age—her real age. She probably had children at home.

“O.K.,” the woman said, looking down. “It’s between us.”

“Thank you,” Sasha said. “Thank you, thank you.” Relief and the first gentle waves of Xanax made her feel faint, and she leaned against the wall. She sensed the woman’s eagerness to get away. She had an urge to slide to the floor.

There was a rap on the door, a man’s voice: “Any luck?”

Sasha and Alex left the hotel and stepped into desolate, windy Tribeca. She was tired of him. In a mere twenty minutes, they’d blown past the point of meaningful-connection-through-shared-experience into the less appealing state of knowing-each-other-too-well. Alex wore a knit cap pulled over his forehead. His eyelashes were long and black. “That was weird,” he said finally.

“Yeah,” Sasha said. Then, after a pause, “You mean finding it?”

“The whole thing. But yeah.” He turned to her. “Was it, like, concealed from view?”

“It was lying on the floor. In the corner. Kind of behind a planter.” The utterance of this lie caused tiny pinpricks of sweat to emerge on Sasha’s Xanax-soothed skull. She considered saying, “Actually, there was no planter,” but managed not to.

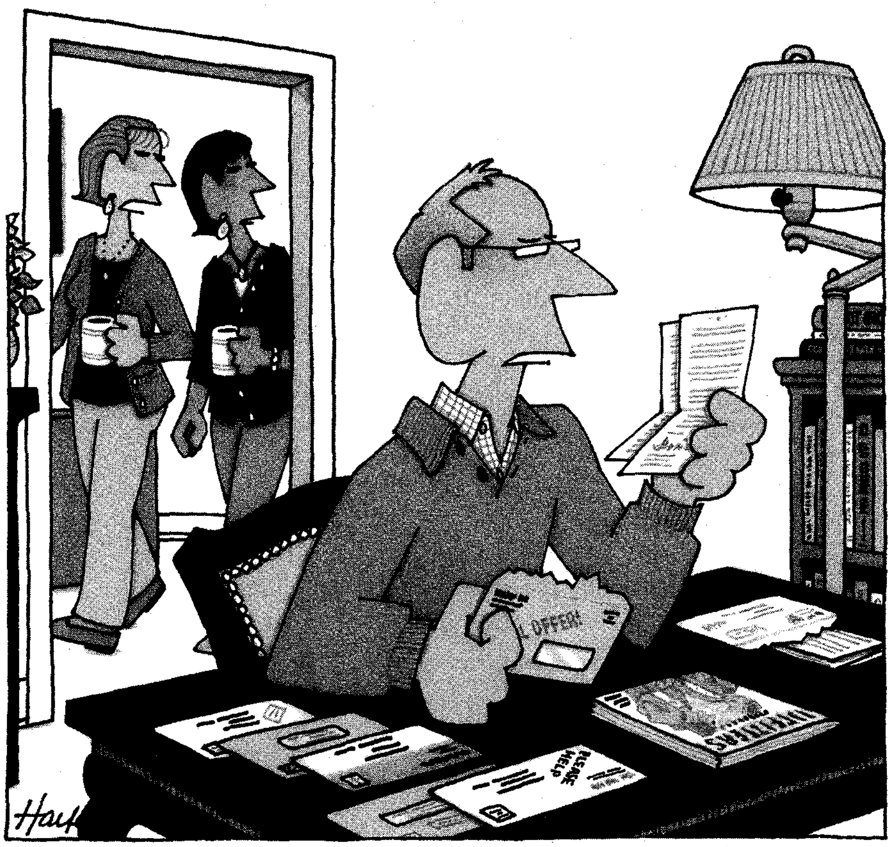
“It’s almost like she did it on purpose,” Alex said. “For attention or something.”

“She didn’t seem like that type.”

“You can’t tell. That’s something I’m learning, here in N.Y.C.: you have no fucking idea what people are really like. It’s not even that they’re two-faced—they’re, like, multiple personalities.”

“She wasn’t from New York,” Sasha said, irked by his obliviousness even as she sought to preserve it. “Remember? She was getting on a plane?”

“True,” Alex said. He paused and



“Retirement suits him. He can be distracted for half a day by two minutes’ worth of mail.”

cocked his head, regarding Sasha across the ill-lit sidewalk. "But you know what I'm talking about? That thing about people?"

"I do know," she said carefully. "But I think you get used to it."

"I'd rather just go somewhere else."

It took Sasha a moment to understand. "There is nowhere else," she said.

Alex turned to her, startled. Then he grinned. Sasha grinned back—not the yes/no smile, but related.

"That's ridiculous," Alex said.

They took a cab and climbed the four flights to Sasha's Lower East Side walkup. She'd lived there for six years. The place smelled of scented candles, and there was a velvet throw cloth on her sofa bed and lots of pillows, and an old color TV with a very good picture, and an array of souvenirs from her travels lining the windowsills: a white seashell, a pair of red dice, a small canister of Tiger Balm from Singapore, now dried to the texture of rubber, a tiny bonsai tree that she watered faithfully.

"Look at this," Alex said. "You've got a tub in the kitchen! I've heard of that—I mean I've read about it, but I wasn't sure there were any left. The shower part is new, right? This is a bathtub-in-the-kitchen apartment, right?"

"Yup," Sasha said. "But I almost never use it. I shower at the gym."

The tub was covered with a fitted board. Sasha kept her plates stacked on top of it. Alex ran his hands around the rim of the bath and examined its clawed feet. Sasha took a bottle of grappa from the kitchen cupboard and filled two small glasses.

"I love this place," Alex said. "It feels like old New York. You know this stuff is around, but how do you find it?"

Sasha leaned against the tub beside him and took a tiny sip of grappa. She was trying to remember Alex's age on his profile. Twenty-eight, she thought, but he seemed younger than that, maybe a lot younger. She saw her apartment as he must see it—a flash of local color that would fade almost instantly into the swirl of adventures that everyone has on first coming to New York. It jarred Sasha to think of herself as a glint in the hazy memories that Alex would struggle to organize a year or two from now: *Where was that place with the bathtub? Who was that girl?*

He left the tub to explore the rest of the apartment. To one side of the kitchen was Sasha's bedroom. On the other side, facing the street, was her living room-den-office, which contained two upholstered chairs and the desk she reserved for projects outside of work—publicity for bands she believed in, short reviews for *Vibe* and *Spin*—although these had fallen off sharply in recent years. In fact, the whole apartment, which six years ago had seemed like a way station to some better place, had ended up solidifying around Sasha, gathering mass and weight, until she felt both mired in it and lucky to have it—as if she not only couldn't move on but didn't want to.

Alex leaned over to peer at the tiny collection on Sasha's windowsills. He hadn't noticed the tables where she kept the pile of things she'd stolen: the pens, the binoculars, the keys, the child's scarf, which she'd lifted simply by not returning it when it dropped from a little girl's neck as her mother led her by the hand from a Starbucks. Sasha was already seeing Coz by then, so she recognized the litany of excuses even as they throbbed through her head: winter is almost over; children grow so fast; kids hate scarves; it's too late, they're out the door; I'm embarrassed to return it; I could easily not have seen it fall—in fact, I didn't, I'm just noticing it now. *Look, a scarf! A kid's bright-yellow scarf with pink stripes—too bad, who could it belong to? Well, I'll just pick it up and hold it for a minute.* . . . At home, she'd washed the scarf by hand and folded it neatly. It was one of the things she liked best.

"What's all this?" Alex asked.

He'd discovered the tables now and was staring at the pile. It looked like the work of a miniaturist beaver: a heap of objects that was illegible yet clearly not random. To Sasha's eye, it almost shook under its load of embarrassments and close shaves and little triumphs and moments of pure exhilaration. It contained years of her life compressed. The screwdriver was at the outer edge. Sasha moved closer to Alex, drawn to the sight of him taking everything in.

"And how did you feel, standing with Alex in front of all those things you'd stolen?" Coz asked.

Sasha turned her face into the blue couch because her cheeks were heating up and she hated that. She didn't want to explain to Coz the mix of feelings she'd had, standing there with Alex: the pride she took in these objects, a tenderness that was only heightened by the shame of their acquisition. She'd risked everything, and here was the result: the raw, warped core of her life. Watching Alex move his eyes over the pile of objects stirred something in Sasha. She put her arms around him from behind, and he turned, surprised, but willing. She kissed him full on the mouth, then undid his zipper and kicked off her boots. Alex tried to lead her toward the other room, where they could lie down on the sofa bed, but Sasha dropped to her knees beside the tables and pulled him down, the Persian carpet prickling her back, street light falling through the window onto his hungry, hopeful face, his bare white thighs.

Afterward, they lay on the rug for a long time. The candles started to sputter. Sasha saw the prickly shape of the bonsai silhouetted against the window near her head. All her excitement had seeped away, leaving behind a terrible sadness, an emptiness that felt violent, as if she'd been gouged. She tottered to her feet, hoping that Alex would leave soon. He still had his shirt on.

"You know what I feel like doing?" he said, standing up. "Taking a bath in that tub."

"You can," Sasha said dully. "It works. The plumber was just here."

She pulled up her jeans and collapsed onto a chair. Alex went to the tub and lifted off the cover. Water gushed from the faucet. Its force had always startled Sasha, the few times she'd used it.

Alex's black pants were crumpled on the floor at Sasha's feet. The square of his wallet had worn away the corduroy from one of the back pockets, as if he often wore these pants, and always with the wallet in that place. Sasha glanced over at him. Steam rose from the tub as he dipped in a hand to test the water. Then he came back to the pile of objects and leaned close, as if looking for something specific. Sasha watched him, hoping for a tremor of the excitement she'd felt before, but it was gone.

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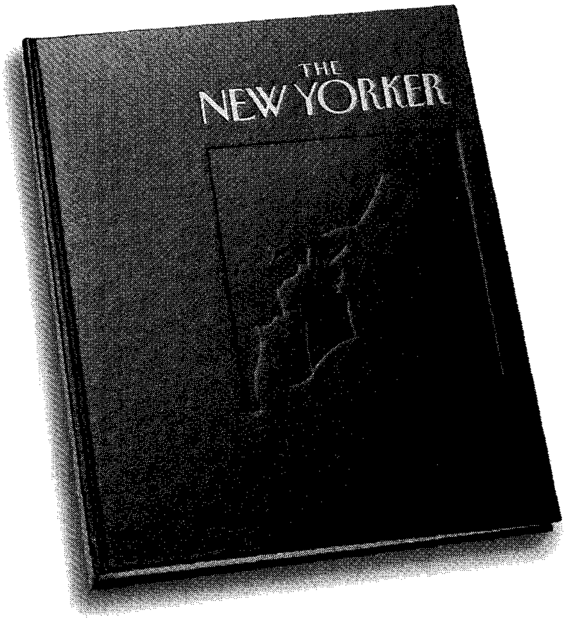

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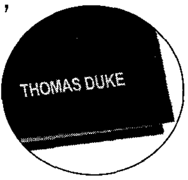

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led it and saw written, in
"I BELIEVE IN YOU." She
at the words. They seemed
/ard her from their meagre
ıng a flush of embarrass-
x, who'd kept this disinte-
:e in his disintegrating wal-
shame at herself for having
ſhe was faintly aware of the
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led the wallet, keeping the
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tucked the wallet back into
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sn't remember it's in there.
: doing him a favor by get-
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ıy, *Hey, I noticed this on the*
;? And he'll say, *That? I've*
before—it must be yours,
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e it to me years ago, and I

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:enly aware of Coz behind
She wanted badly to please
ımething like *It was a turn-*
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ızie and we made up, finally,
up the harp again, or just,
I'm changing, I'm changing.
Redemption, transforma-
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r day, every minute. Didn't

he told Coz. "Don't ask me

" he said quietly.
in silence, the longest si-
.ad ever passed between
ooked at the windowpane,
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. She lay with her body
ing the couch, her spot in
:r view of the window and
faint hum that was always
ıe listened, and these min-
; time: another, then an-
ne more. ♦

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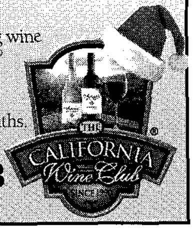

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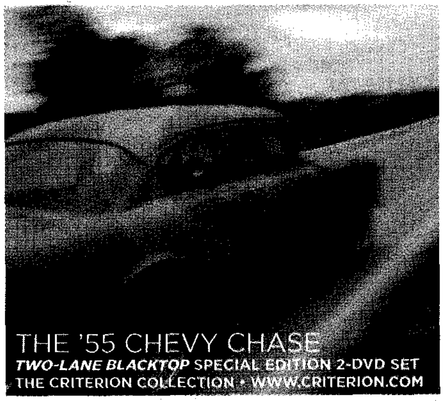
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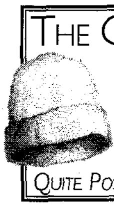

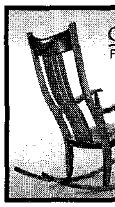

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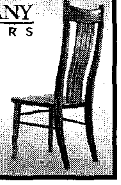

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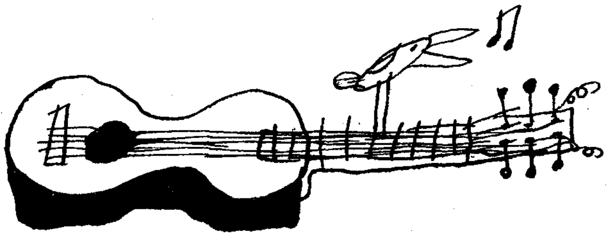

POP MUSIC

WONDER WOMAN

Chan Marshall's transformation.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

The singer and songwriter Chan Marshall performs under an alias—Cat Power—with superhero connotations, but she sometimes struggles simply to get through a concert. She was born Charlyn Marie Marshall, in Georgia, and began appearing in clubs in Atlanta, in the late eighties, while she was still in her teens. I first saw her play in 1995, at a now defunct club called the Cooler, in New York's meatpacking district. She performed alone, seated, with a black-and-white Danelectro guitar. Light-brown bangs covered much of her face, and she slouched, wearily, as if she were entering the fourth hour of an interrogation. When she spoke, she sounded drunk and disoriented. Occasionally, her bangs would swing away from her face, revealing freckles, a heart-shaped mouth, and clear brown eyes. Her voice kept me from leaving; when she was audible, there was a palpable ache in her singing, as well as flashes of sharp, high tones. There were also uncomfortably generous silences.

Whatever else was going wrong, though, Marshall knew how to dramatize a song, alternating bursts of passion with unintelligible whispers. It's hard to know what to call the music that she was playing. She strummed her guitar tentatively, repeating a few simple chords. It sounded a bit like the quieter moments in songs by Sonic Youth, but stripped of confidence. At one point, there was a long and painful pause as Marshall nervously tuned her guitar. She mumbled apologies while a sympathetic audience member tried to quiet the chatter in the room.

Her voice compelled me to buy her albums, which were bewitching even when they were vexing. In early songs, like "Nude As the News," from 1996, Marshall the songwriter came up short on melody and structure, while Marshall the singer flourished, singing conversationally and then pushing her voice upward, to a range where it sounded weirdly comfortable and pure. Though her songs lagged behind her singing, Marshall was developing a sense for piercing, if unmoored, lyrics. The chorus of "Nude As the News"—"Jackson, Jesse, I've got a son in me"—appears to be a confession to the Reverend but was, in fact, Marshall later divulged, an autobiographical story about an abortion that she'd had when she was twenty. (Jesse and Jackson are the children of Patti Smith, one of Marshall's heroes.) By 1998, when Marshall released the album "Moon Pix," she had become a minor star. The French, in particular, took to her gamine looks and confused air; by the end of the century, she had entered the upper rank of independent musicians, despite suffering from debilitating stagefright and having recorded only a handful of good songs.

In 2000, Marshall released "The Covers Record." She had been recording songs by other musicians for years; her first two albums included tracks by Tom Waits and Hank Williams. But "The Covers Record" consisted almost entirely of songs by other people, and, with one exception (the folk song "Salty Dog," in which Matt Sweeney played the guitar), Marshall sang and played—the piano and the guitar—unaccompanied. Something, probably cigarettes, had rubbed some texture into her voice, and she had learned how to manipulate her breathy middle range. She had found the place, between an incantation and a whisper, where her voice wanted to settle, and revealed herself to be a conjurer, like Nina Simone and Patti Smith: someone who could bring a song home, not through force but by teasing and delaying words, and by resisting standard line readings. Marshall is expert at singing painful lines as if she can't feel a thing, and at crying out seemingly benign lines as if she's being lanced.

"The Covers Record" also provided Marshall with songs that she needed but hadn't been able to write: personal but poetically indirect, intimate but still odd. Several of the tracks were traditional folk songs, such as "Kingsport Town," which was recorded by Bob Dylan in 1962. Others were by living songwriters: Bill Callahan's "Red Apples," Lou Reed's "I Found a Reason," the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"—which Marshall gently pulverizes by eliminating the famous central riff, quietly finger-picking the chords, and singing the lyrics as if she's experienced plenty of satisfaction. "Doing this and signing that" sound like strenuous activities in her blissful, supine interpretation.

In 2005, Marshall made a new album, using a radically different approach. With the help of Chris Lombardi, the founder of Matador Records, and the Memphis music critic Robert Gordon, she assembled a band of musicians, some of whom had appeared on her favorite Southern soul records in the seventies. Called the Memphis Rhythm Band, it featured local R.&B. royalty—Mabon (Teenie) Hodges, who played and co-wrote several songs with Al Green, and Steve Potts, a drummer who played with Booker T. and the M.G.s. For Marshall, an inconsistent performer, working with musicians of this stature took guts. The resulting album, "The Greatest," was a startling leap forward. For the first time, Marshall wrote songs that matched her capabilities as a singer, and in a mode—classic Southern soul—

Marshall is a conjurer; she brings a song home by resisting standard line readings. Photograph by Ethan Levitas.

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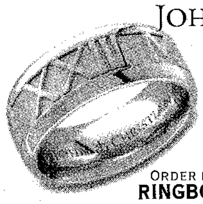

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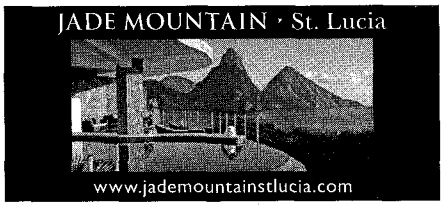

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& I learnt yesterday
I'm getting laid off.

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& too often.
My pension

long gone, my job farmed
out to someone

better at failing—
I've been trained

in nothing.
I have taken myself

apart in the dark—
put back

together like a soldier
in the rain—one gear

always left over.

—*Kevin Young*

utterly unlike the shambolic rock with which she had begun her career.

In September, 2006, I saw Marshall play in New York, and she seemed transformed. She wore a faded green shirt, bluejeans, and black Christian Louboutin heels. She waved her hands, shimmied to the music, and played a game with a pack of cigarettes, throwing it offstage and then retrieving it. (In interviews, Marshall has credited sobriety and antidepressants with helping her to overcome stagefright and put an end to some of her more erratic behavior.) When she played her new songs, they sounded as fully realized and idiosyncratic as the covers she had recorded. "Lived in Bars," from "The Greatest," is a slow, deliberate rumination about "living in a bottle." The lyrics avoid both the pat sentimentality of barroom camaraderie and the hollow rhetoric of recovery. Though Marshall mentions "ending it all," she makes her local bar sound like the kind of place that you could happily lose a few weeks in: "Send in the trumpets, the marching wheelchairs. Open the blankets, and give them some air. Swords and arches, bones and cement, the light and the dark of the innocent of men."

Marshall's new album, "Jukebox," which will be released in January, is an implicit sequel to "The Covers Record": another collection of songs by others, plus two songs by Marshall. But where "The Covers Record" was relentlessly bare and almost claustrophobically focussed on her voice, "Jukebox" builds on the aesthetic that she began developing in "The Greatest." The album features Marshall's new group, Dirty Delta Blues, which includes several well-known indie-rock musicians—among them Jim White, of the Dirty Three, and Judah Bauer, of Blues Explosion—but the music is still Southern soul, albeit slowed down and deformed. The opening track is a cover of "New York, New York"; the melody and the chords have been upended, and the music sounds like a slack version of an Otis Redding song. If you don't listen closely to the words, you probably wouldn't recognize the song. Marshall has eliminated Liza Minnelli's and Frank Sinatra's bravado and substituted a surefooted sense of delight.

Still, the album drags in places, whereas "The Greatest" snapped and burned. Marshall's voice and the band members' instruments have been mixed with an unusual amount of echo; sometimes the effect evokes an empty club at 3 A.M., but sometimes it seems to sap energy from the performances. The album's highlight is Marshall's version of James Brown's "Lost Someone," a slow dance that she allows to build to a peak without ever overreaching or trying to shout herself out of the heartbreak. "Never go to strangers, come on home to me," she chants, first in a low murmur and later in a cry, neither particularly anguished. Marshall could not have conquered a song this blunt and desperate in her youth. But, now that she knows better who she is, perhaps she's less afraid of losing herself. ♦

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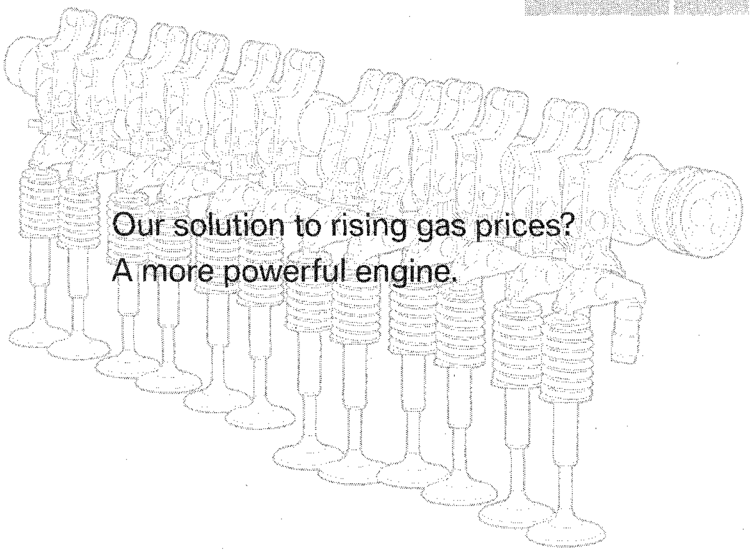
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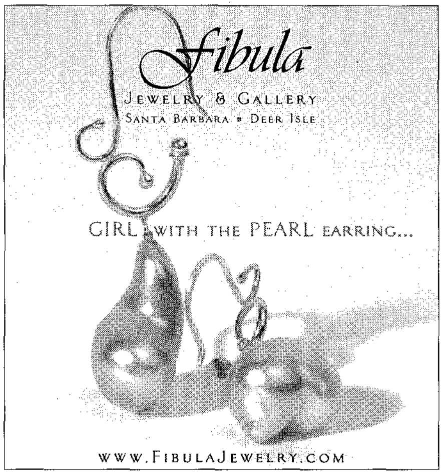
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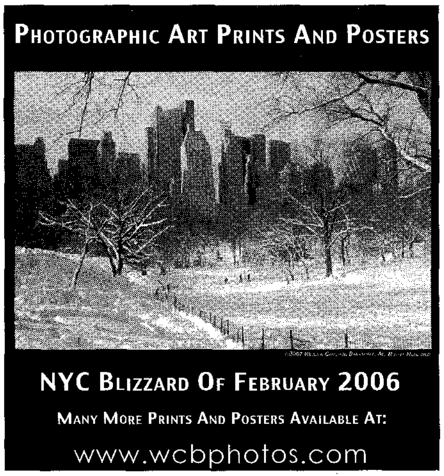
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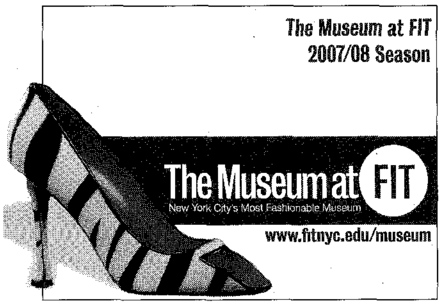
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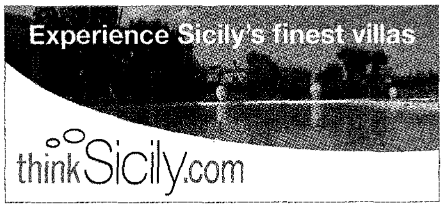
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A CRITIC AT LARGE

WOKE UP THIS MORNING

Why do we read diaries?

BY LOUIS MENAND

Eventually, our species will die out and a new race will arrive to inhabit the planet. This race will have a giant mess to clean up—all the stuff that human beings accumulated in pursuit of pleasure and profit, but for which these new beings will have no use. Huge mounds of motorboats, football stadiums, air-conditioners, sunblock, and other absolute necessities of life as we once conceived it will rise to the skies. One towering, teetering pile will consist of books with mostly blank pages—some of them ordinary notebooks, some expensive leather-bound volumes, some with decorated covers and hand-pressed leaves, some with tiny locks for tiny keys and little loops into which a special, ultra-thin pencil might fit. The new beings will not understand what these objects were for, or why they found so unbelievably many of them in drawers and trunks and attics, everywhere they looked. But we know what they are: they are unused and abandoned personal diaries.

The impulse to keep a diary is to actual diaries as the impulse to go on a diet is to actual slimness. Most of us do wish that we were slim diarists. It's not that we imagine that we would be happier if we kept a diary; we imagine that we would be better—that diarizing is a natural, healthy thing, a sign of vigor and purpose, a statement, about life, that *we care*, and that non-diarizing or, worse, failed diarizing is a confession of moral inertia, an acknowledgment, even, of the ultimate pointlessness of one's being in the world. Still, rationally considered, what is natural or healthy about writing down what happened every day in a book that no one else is supposed to read? Isn't there something a little O.C.D. about this kind of behavior? Writing is onerous (especially with an ultra-thin pencil)—writing feels like work because it *is* work—and, day by day, life is pretty routine, repetitive, and, we should face it, boring. So why do a few keep diaries, when diary-keeping is, for many, too much?

Three theories immediately suggest themselves. They are theories of the ego, the id, and the superego (and what is left, really?). The ego theory holds that maintaining a diary demands a level of vanity and self-importance that is simply too great for most people to sustain for long periods of time. It obliges you to believe that the stuff that happened to you is worth writing down because it happened *to you*. This is why so many diaries are abandoned by circa January 10th: keeping this up, you quickly realize, means something worse than being insufferable to others; it means being insufferable to yourself. People find that they just can't take themselves seriously enough to continue. They may regret this—people capable of taking themselves seriously tend to go farther in life—but they accept it and move on to other things, such as collecting stamps.

The id theory, on the other hand, states that people use diaries to record wishes and desires that they need to keep secret, and to list failures and disappointments that they cannot admit publicly have given them pain. Diary-keeping, on this account, is just neurotic, since the last thing most people want to do with their unconsummated longings and petty humiliations is to inscribe them permanently in a book. They want to forget them, and so they soon quit writing them down. Most people don't confess; they repress.

And the superego theory, of course, is the theory that diaries are really written for the eyes of others. They are exercises in self-justification. When we describe the day's events and our management of them, we have in mind a wise and benevolent reader who will someday see that we played, on the whole, and despite the best efforts of selfish and unworthy colleagues and relations, a creditable game with the hand we were dealt. If we speak frankly about our own missteps and shortcomings, it is only to gain this reader's trust. We write to appease the father. People abandon their diaries when they realize that the task is hopeless.

These are powerful, possibly brilliant theories, and they account for much. But, though they help explain why people generally don't like to write diaries, they do not explain why people generally do like to read them. The obvious assumption is that we read diaries because we want to know what the diarist was really like as a person, but how plausible, even in the case of famous diarists, is this? It's true that we read the diaries of Virginia Woolf because they were written by Virginia Woolf, who, in addition to being an interesting novelist, was an interesting character. But (a paradox of representation) we would actually feel that we had a more intimate sense of Virginia Woolf if we read about her in *someone else's* diary. Woolf described from the outside by another person is likely to give us a more vivid picture of what Virginia Woolf was really like than Woolf described from the inside by herself. Introspection is not as reliable as observation. (That's why we have shrinks.)

Dear Diary,
Spent the morning and much of the afternoon writing in my diary.

"Leave nothing out" is one of the perverse rules of diary-keeping.

BARRY BLITT

Inside, everyone sounds, more or less eloquently, like the same broken record of anxiety and resentment. It's the outside, the way people look and the things they say, that makes them distinct. We read Woolf's diaries so that we can see other people through Woolf's eyes:

> Pale, marmoreal Eliot was there last week, like a chapped office boy on a high stool, with a cold in his head, until he warms a little, which he did. We walked back along the Strand. "The critics say I am learned & cold" he said. "The truth is I am neither." As he said this, I think coldness at least must be a sore point with him. (February 16, 1921.)
>
> Edith Sitwell has grown very fat, powders herself thickly, gilds her nails with silver paint, wears a turban & looks like an ivory elephant, like the Emperor Heliogabalus. I have never seen such a change. She is mature, majestical. She is monumental. Her fingers are crusted with white coral. She is altogether composed. (July 23, 1930.)
>
> Dr. Freud gave me a narcissus. Was sitting in a great library with little statues at a large scrupulously tidy shiny table. We like patients on chairs. A screwed up shrunk very old man: with a monkeys light eyes, paralysed spasmodic movements, inarticulate: but alert. (January 29, 1939.)

Woolf was one of those writers who keep the instrument in tune: she wrote, sometimes, just to be writing, whether there was anything of significance to write about or not. So a reader of her diaries (of the five-volume complete edition, anyway) has to wade through a fair amount of rote record-keeping, panning for the nuggets:

> Brain rather dried up after 6 days strenuous London. Tuesday dinner to meet Duff Cooper; Wednesday Ethel Smyth; Thursday Nessa & dressmaker; Friday Harcourt Brace. So I'm running in a circle, having got on to the university chapter [of "Three Guineas"] a difficult one. Very very hot. Very noisy. The hotel dancing; buses everywhere. (June 11, 1937.)

"Never discriminate, never omit" is one of the unstated rules of diary-keeping. The rule is perverse, because all writing is about control, and writing a diary is a way to control the day—to have, as it were, the last word. But diaries are composed under the fiction that the day is in control, that you are simply a passive recorder of circumstance, and so everything has to go in whether it mattered or not—as though deciding when it didn't were somehow not your business. In a diary, the trivial and inconsequential—the "woke up, got out of bed, dragged a comb across my head" pieces—are not trivial and inconsequential at all; they are defining features of the genre. If it doesn't contain a lot of dross, it's not a diary. It's something else—a journal, or a writer's notebook, or a blog (blather is not the same as dross). For a diarist, if nothing important happened, it's extremely important to say so:

> In the morning, before I went forth old East brought me a dozen of bottles of sack and I gave him a shilling for his pains.
>
> Then I went to Mr. Sheply; who was drawing of sack in the wine-cellar to send to other places as a gift from my Lord, and told me that my Lord hath given him order to give me the dozen of bottles.
>
> Thence I went to the Temple to speak with Mr. Calthropp about the 60*l.* due to my Lord; but missed of him, he being abroad. Then I went to Mr. Crew's and borrowed 10*l.* of Mr. Andrewes for my own use; and so went to my office, where there was nothing to do. (January 2, 1660.)

These are the words of the most famous diarist in English, Samuel Pepys, who maintained his diary for only nine years, from 1660 to 1669, when he quit, because he thought he was going blind. He did not go blind, and lived until 1703, but he never recommenced the diary. It was first published, in abridged form, in 1825, and then in many editions thereafter. Its popularity is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century.

Pepys was a busy and highly placed administrator in the Royal Navy, and he was witness to a lot of history. The charm of his diary, though, which is preserved in the various abridgments (the whole thing is available in eleven volumes, published by the University of California), is the conviction that missed dates, boring days at the office, and troubles with the maid are as worthy of record as affairs of state—a conviction that presumably helps explain his appeal in a century devoted to the ennoblement of bourgeois satisfactions.

> Dined at home in the garret, where my wife dressed the remains of a turkey, and in the doing of it she burned her hand. (January 1, 1660.)

> So to bed, where my wife and I had some high words upon my telling her that I would fling the dog which her brother gave her out at the window if he pissed the house any more. (February 12, 1660.)

> Slept pretty well, and my <wife> waked to ring the bell to call up our maids to the washing about 4 a-clock and I was, and she, angry that our bell did not wake them sooner, but I will get a bigger bell. (October 6, 1663.)

There are also the choice offhand judgments (Pepys was a cultivated man):

> And then to the King's Theatre, where we saw "Midsummers nights dreame," which I have never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life. (September 29, 1662.)

Meanwhile, the Restoration of Charles II, the Great Plague, the Great Fire of London, and the Second Anglo-Dutch War are taking place.

The memorializing of the mundane is part of the flattening of foreground-background contrast that makes diaries different from memoirs and other forms of historical narrative. It's also a sign of the diary's absolute fidelity to the present. You would read a published diary that you knew had been abridged (most have been), but you would not read a diary whose entries you knew had been altered or updated. You wouldn't read it as a diary, anyway. The just-the-facts elimination of perspective, discrimination, and reflection, and the sense of bathos and non sequitur that sometimes results, fits certain personality types beautifully.

> Back to Wash. Nancy went to L.A. & then to Phoenix so I'm here alone. I'm watching the Rose Bowl—U.C.L.A. 45 Ill. 9—so far. (January 2, 1984.)

> A really easy day. NSC—Cap getting ready to release study by commission investigating Beirut massacre of our Marines (241). They are going to charge there was negligence on part of officers regarding safety precautions. I'm worried about the effect of this on families that lost loved ones. Another briefing in situation room on Soviet nuclear arms & the almost impossibility of verifying whether they are cheating or not. Did year end interview with 4 wire services. Had a haircut & upstairs. (December 23, 1983.)

From the diaries of Ronald Reagan. Compare, as a matter of tone, Andy Warhol:

> We went to Castel's (taxi $4). The same old crowd was there, having Caroline of Monaco's secret engagement dinner to Philippe Junot. We weren't asked. (June 3, 1977.)

> Found out that after I left Halston's, Rusty discovered a fire that'd started in a fireplace and gone to a Marisol sculpture and into a closet, and if Rusty hadn't noticed it, Halston's would have burned.
>
> I'm giving everyone framed underwear for Christmas. Went up to 86th Street and then down (cabs $5, $4).
>
> Jon called, said he was back in town. (November 26, 1982.)

Complete irony and the complete absence of irony ultimately meet in the same place.

With Reagan, though, you never see other people. He was just not concretely interested in other people, and so his diaries are not interesting. Warhol, on the other hand, liked to watch—he was, socially and sexually, a voyeur—and so his diaries are:

> When we left the Shivas, Bianca wanted to stop back at Halston's to pick something up. When we got there, there was a pretty boy in a fur coat standing outside, and when we walked in, there was Liza Minnelli talking to Halston. She wanted to know if she and Baryshnikov—it was him outside—could spend some time at his place. So we weren't supposed to see this. And Liza and Baryshnikov were taking so much cocaine, I didn't know they took so much, just shoveling it in, and it was so exciting to see two really fa-

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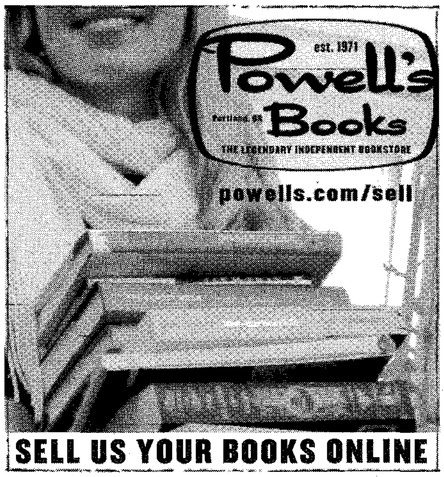
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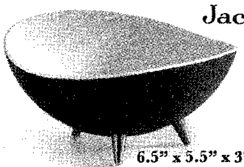
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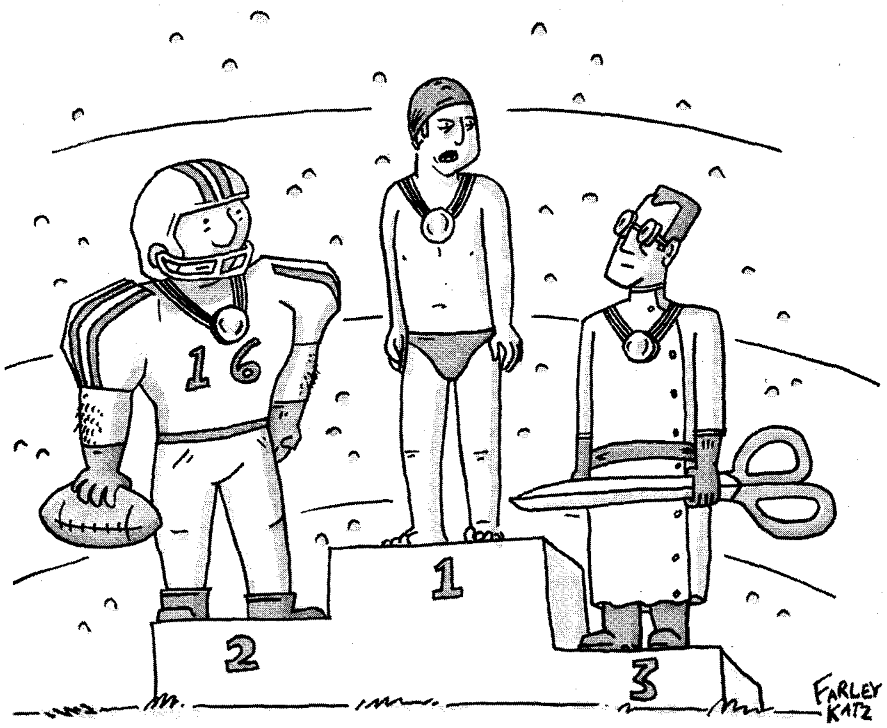

"That was one strange and confusing competition."

• •

mous people right there in front of you taking drugs, about to go make it with each other.

Liza is just back from the rest cure in Texas, and she's going to start doing "The Act" again. (January 28, 1978.)

At least one person has read the entire "Journals: 1952-2000," by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (Penguin; $40), from start to finish, and this person can report that the work yields the exact degree of pleasure that can be derived from standing on a moving sidewalk: it's painless, you don't want it to stop, and there is not a single surprise in it. Apart from mostly harmless gossip, there is little that might not have appeared, without embarrassment or embellishment, in a *Times* Op-Ed piece (and Schlesinger wrote his share of those). If Schlesinger had secrets, he kept them.

Schlesinger was convivial and gregarious, a two-Martini-lunch man. He was a confidant of the Kennedys, an adviser to many of the other Democratic politicians of his day, and, after he left Harvard and the Kennedy White House, a socially active Upper East Sider. He knew a large number of people within his social comfort zone, which was the comfort zone of a nineteen-sixties liberal with nineteen-fifties tastes, and (on the evidence of the journal that has been published, cut from some six thousand pages) he seems to have disliked only those whom he suspected of disliking him. But he was a golden retriever: he liked being liked much more than he disliked being disliked, and his greatest happiness was the recognition of his fellow-establishmentarians. In 1998, when he was eighty-one, he testified, before a House committee, against the impeachment of Bill Clinton:

> The *Times* made the hearings its lead story the next morning (Tuesday the 10th)—a very good story by Linda Greenhouse. C-Span and CNN had carried the hearings, and for a few hours I became a local hero. People stopped me on the streets, and I was almost applauded when I entered the Century Club. (November 12, 1998.)

There is something sweet and a little heartbreaking about that "almost."

The reader of Schlesinger's diary does see other people through Schlesinger's eyes, but those people appear uncannily as advertised. The life that Schlesinger observed from inside the Kennedy Administration—"Caroline, an enchanting little girl, dashing in and out carrying a football" (December 1, 1960)—was not

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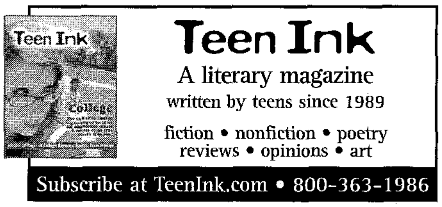
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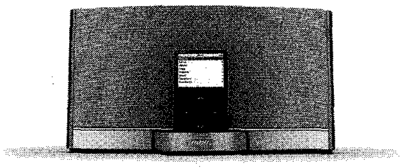

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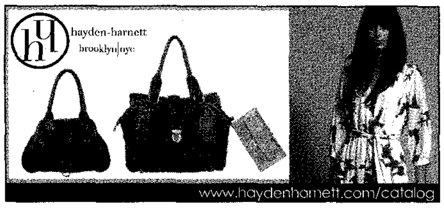

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very different from the way the rest of the world imagined it. One sometimes has to fight off the sense that Schlesinger never actually met these people, and is making it up. Jack is always debonair and cool. Bobby is savvy, caring, and intense, with a hint of sadness and rue. Jackie is utterly beautiful, utterly charming. Teddy is a lot more impressive than one might have expected.

And so it is with nearly everyone Schlesinger meets: the insights won by personal acquaintance accord with the conventional judgment. You could almost guess the identities from the descriptions:

> He has a natural and honorable dislike of the kind of speech which seeks to buy votes by making promises. But he recoils from this with a political puritanism which regards any popular position (at least on the liberal side) as somehow immoral. (August 11, 1952.)

That is Adlai Stevenson, for whom Schlesinger wrote speeches before he defected to Kennedy.

> His flow of talk was incessant, almost compulsive. The language was vivid and picturesque but unforced. One got the sense of a man who exists almost completely in the realm of tactics, a virtuoso in senatorial operation; yet with a nostalgic identification of himself as a liberal and a desire, other things being equal, to be on the liberal side. While plainly intelligent, he seemed little concerned with the merits of issues. On questions of parliamentary manipulation and of the personalities of his colleagues, he seemed enormously astute and perceptive. I found him both more attractive, more subtle and more formidable than I expected. (March 30-31, 1957.)

L.B.J., who would force Schlesinger out of the White House after Kennedy's death.

> I do not think I have seen anyone so beautiful; I was enchanted by her manner and her wit, at once so masked, so ingenuous and so penetrating. But one felt a terrible unreality about her—as if talking to someone under water. (August 6, 1962.)

Marilyn Monroe, for whose attentions, Schlesinger says, he and Bobby engaged in friendly competition at a party. No record in the diary of which man was the winner.

> He is a stocky, bluff, humorous, robust fellow, fresh after a long hot day; a natural pol and demagogue, earnest and rather naïve; a shock of well-combed white hair; ruddy face; likable but not especially impressive; certainly no alternative to Gorbachev. (September 11, 1989.)

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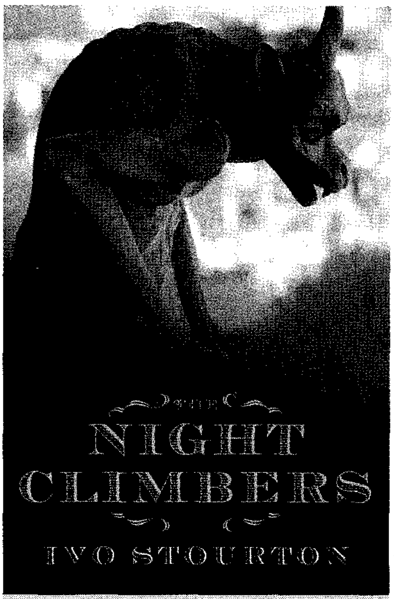

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> impression of bluestocking severity; but, as Jackie told me at the Academy luncheon earlier in the day, she has an excellent sense of humor and is great fun. (May 23, 1993.)

Hillary Clinton.

> Very graceful in body movements when he danced. (December 22, 1983.)

Mick Jagger.

Of course, people famous for their personalities just have those personalities. They aren't faking it. But an observer can tweak the image freshly or not, and Schlesinger does not. He is happy when celebrities act like themselves, and he is therefore rarely disillusioned. In the circumstances, it's something of a relief to read the following:

> Lollobrigida was a disappointment. (July 13, 1960.)

"I must say that I adore sitting around hotel rooms with politicians and newspapermen exchanging gossip over drinks," Schlesinger wrote in the spring of 1960, when Kennedy and Humphrey were fighting for the Democratic Presidential nomination; and, though it may be a fluke of the abridgment, it is striking how much day-to-day politics dominates his journals. Schlesinger rarely records thoughts about the books he is reading or writing, except to note how far behind he is and to regret that his addiction to politics and parties keeps distracting him from his work. He is sorry that he did not produce more books. (His history of the New Deal and his autobiography were both left unfinished.) Anyone who reads the "Journals," though, will feel that he had nothing to be sorry for. Life is only once, and Schlesinger had the good fortune to enjoy his in company that gave him pleasure. The world has plenty of books.

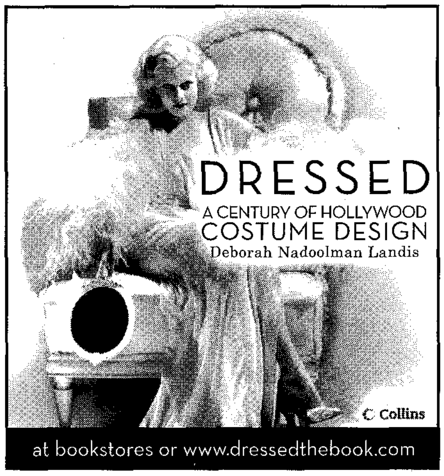
Schlesinger makes a brief appearance in "The Grand Surprise: The Journals of Leo Lerman" (Knopf; $37.50). He turns up in Lerman's sharp and entertaining account of Truman Capote's famous Black and White Ball, at the Plaza in 1966, "the party of the century":

> Jerome Robbins embellishing the Peter Duchin beat, with the special Robbins-syncopated beat while dancing Lauren Bacall across the floor, only to be cut in on by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who after a moment of staid Harvard hopping abruptly left Miss Bacall on the floor, rushed up apologizing to Mr. Robbins, explaining that he hadn't realized. The new Astaire-Rogers resumed the Robbins-Duchin beat. (December 1, 1966.)

This gives, naturally, a much more vivid idea of what Schlesinger was really like than anything in Schlesinger's own journals.

Lerman was a New Yorker—he was born in 1914 in what is now Spanish Harlem, into a lower-middle-class Jewish family—who had a long career as an editor, consultant, and writer at glossy magazines, principally *Mademoiselle* and *Vogue*. He served as editor-in-chief of *Vanity Fair* for eight months, in 1983. It was the high point of his career, but he was sixty-nine, and his health was never good. He was replaced by Tina Brown, and he died in 1994. Lerman operated in the shadow of Alexander Liberman, the editorial director of Condé Nast and his great rival. But he was the sort of person without whom magazines like those could not exist: a gay man whose evenings were free to be spent at openings and parties, who went everywhere and knew everyone, backstage as well as onstage, and who could tell you whose star was about to rise, whose was falling, and who was about to go into treatment. Publishing a successful monthly magazine means being able to guess which names everyone will want to be reading about many weeks down the road, and you need scouts to do that. Lerman was a born scout.

He had literary ambitions—he dreamed of writing a novel like Proust's—but, despite a fair amount of self-laceration, recorded in these journals, he never made much headway. (Not many people who have that particular dream do make much headway.) Instead, he kept a journal. According to his editor, Stephen Pascal, "The Grand Surprise" amounts to a tenth of the total. (There are also excerpts from letters.) And it is a surprise, on two counts. First, as an edition. Schlesinger's journals were edited by his sons Andrew and Stephen; both are historians, but they provide virtually no annotation, and they manage to misspell names: Walter Lippmann, Alvin From, Roger Straus, Claus von Bülow, Daryl Hannah. "The Grand



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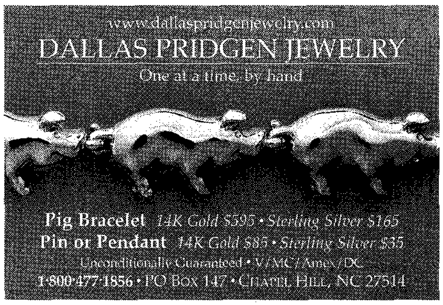

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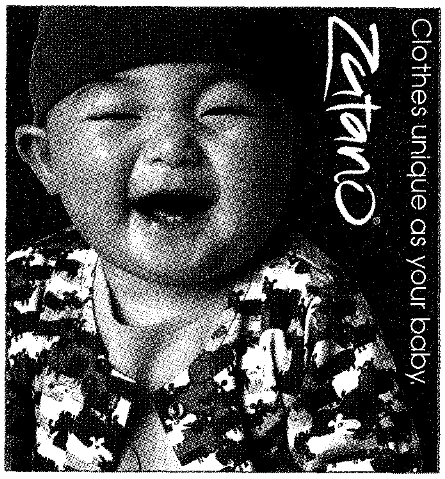

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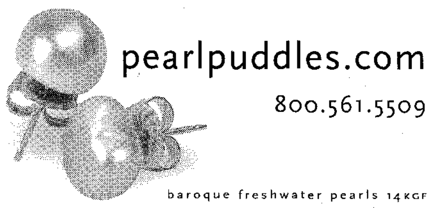

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Surprise," on the other hand, is an editorial labor of love. The volume aspires to re-create the mid-century transatlantic world of art and letters, and the annotation is quite fantastic, as though Pascal (who was Lerman's assistant for many years, and who had the help of several people close to Lerman, including his longtime partner, Gray Foy) knew every affair, *mariage blanc*, and *nom-de-travail* of every artist, émigré, poseur, and arriviste in that scene—great figure-cutters in their day, most of them now long forgotten. Pascal's footnotes, identifying names in Lerman's text, are keyholes onto that vanished life, almost like miniature movie treatments:

> Rudolf Kommer (1885-1943) had begun as director Max Reinhardt's managing agent, parlaying very little expertise into a web of influence. By the time of his death in wartime New York, Kommer was Alice Astor's business manager and rumored to be a Nazi spy.
>
> Baron Federico von Berzeviczy-Pallavicini (1909-89), a Swiss-born set designer and magazine art director (*Flair*), started out in the twenties dressing windows at the luxurious Viennese confectionery Demel. During the thirties, he made a *mariage blanc* with the niece of Demel's Jewish owners, which allowed her to enter a convent under his name and survive the war. She died in 1965, leaving Demel to Pallavicini.

The other surprise in "The Grand Surprise" is Lerman himself. His tastes were the predictable tastes of a gay cultural butterfly of his era: he was fascinated by Marlene Dietrich, Maria Callas, most of Balanchine's principal dancers, Margot Fonteyn, Judy Garland, Garbo, Jackie O., and he knew several of them quite intimately. A certain amount of gushing is mandatory at this level of world-class entertainment, as well as a certain amount of cattiness. No doubt Lerman was an accomplished companion to the divas. But he had a cool eye as well. He knew that Dietrich was ruining herself by endless self-imitation in a nonstop cabaret act, that Callas could produce ugly sounds and was a fool to be besotted with a vulgar billionaire like Onassis. He also knew where a performer's special magic lay, and he had a deft, pen-and-ink style of portrait sketching. He's an image tweaker. At the ballet, in London, in 1955, two years after Gielgud had been arrested for "cottaging"—cruising a public lavatory—in Chelsea:

> John Gielgud and two young fellows (very sissy) sat next to us and we talked and he sent love to Karen Blixen [Isak Dinesen, whom Lerman had befriended]. "I'm just in the throes of Lear," he said to me, ". . . in the throes." Later he strode away, incredibly slender in a dark straight coat and black homburg, a flower in the coat and a handkerchief jutting from its pocket, a general air of being Graham Robertson [subject of a Sargent portrait]. The two sissies ran along, one in front and one behind. It was like a Beardsley as they vanished down a little Covent Garden street. (May 13, 1955.)

Baryshnikov in 1974, the year he defected to the West, being photographed by Richard Avedon for *Vogue:*

> He could be any boy on a street corner—pale, stockyish, blond, retiring, but friendly, slight. If he were in a room with other people, he would not be noticed save for his deep-set, heavily shadowed, sad, somewhat doomed blue eyes—eyes curiously related to Marlene's now that she is old and lost, her world gone quite awry. His dancing strength comes from his feet—beautifully shaped feet of enormous strength and flexibility. You feel that he could write with his feet. (Rudi's dancing strength comes from his buttocks, Eddie Villella's from his thighs.) When this boy stands on the floor, peering into a long glass, warming up, he becomes noble romantic—a tremendous presence, not flashy but magical. Then suddenly he is airborne: There is no visible preparation. He is so masculine that there is a sort of feminine quality that flavors his dancing. (August 1, 1974.)

Capote was a close friend, Vidal less so. In Venice, 1975:

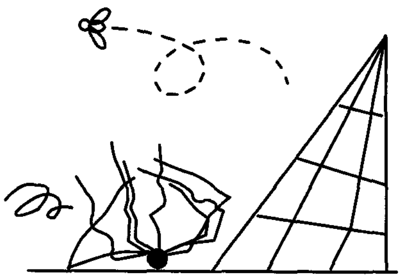
> After our long day's enchanting rest, yesterday we went down and found Gore—big, complacent, pompous, assured that his every platitude is an apothegm, a witty wisdom. But despite this lifelong dry rot, he has charm and a certain attractiveness. He said that he didn't eat much, but drank a lot. "I'm an alcoholic . . ." (July 29, 1975.)

"At least we know that the only happiness is acceptance," Lerman wrote to a friend in 1948. Thank God that's not completely true, but acceptance is one source of happiness, anyway. Did Lerman feel accepted? It's hard to say. There is a lot of self-doubt, and even self-pity, in the journals, and he might have reflected, on occasion, that famous artists returned his phone calls because they were phone calls from a man who worked at *Mademoiselle* and *Vogue*. But everyone has reflections of that kind. Only a few think it's a good idea to store them up in a diary. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Orpheus Lost, *by Janette Turner Hospital (Norton; $24.95).* When Leela-May Magnolia Moore, a graduate student studying the mathematics of music, hears Mishka Bartok playing his violin in the Harvard Square station, she follows him up the stairs to the crowded street and loses her heart. Previously, Hospital's interest in coincidence has been fruitful; her 2003 novel, "Due Preparations for the Plague," in which the children of the victims of a downed transatlantic flight discover that the passenger list wasn't arbitrary but rigged, was distinguished by an ability to render both the experience of extreme grief and the suspenseful mechanics of a conspiracy plot. Here the many plot twists (is Mishka the illegitimate son of a Lebanese terrorist?) seem forced rather than fated, and Leela's reveries about Mishka and his eerie Orphic playing add to the mishmash.

How to Be Perfect, *by Ron Padgett (Coffee House; $15).* Padgett's plainspoken, wry poems deliver their wisdom through a kind of connoisseurship of absurdity. He writes, "Everything I think about is a cartoon something/because anything cartoon is immortal/in its own funny little way." Yet these observational, reminiscent, and prescriptive verses are also informed by a sense of loss—not just for his late mother and for departed comrades like Kenneth Koch but for the bohemian ideal that drew him to New York to begin with: "Although one still hears the word *conformity*," he laments, "it is no longer a pejorative term; now we are *on the same page, getting with the program, team players*." Even so, Padgett's cockeyed humor is ultimately optimistic, finding reason for continued hope, even if it means joining "the poetry protection program/so my poems can go out and live under assumed names/in Utah and Muskogee."



Richard M. Nixon, *by Conrad Black (PublicAffairs; $40).* In the thousand and fifty pages of this biography by a fallen media baron of a fallen President, few events are neglected and many are well told. But Black, attempting a reconsideration of his subject, merely provides an exculpatory gloss for seemingly every grimy facet of Nixon's career. He presents the 1968 "Southern strategy" as a principled stand against Northern hypocrisy. On Vietnam, his invocations of "insolent" Communists, their "witless dupes," and "child grenade carriers" (as he refers to those murdered at My Lai) take on a deranged air; he unwittingly provides an object lesson in the kind of thinking that mired America there. Interestingly, given what Black refers to in the acknowledgments as his own "serious judicial problems," he argues that Nixon's best move in Watergate would have been to surreptitiously delete damaging parts of the tapes and then make up a cover story—"whatever he wanted." Hoping to be Nixon's redeemer, Black comes off as his apologist.

The Murder of Regilla, *by Sarah B. Pomeroy (Harvard; $24.95).* In Athens in 160 A.D., Regilla, a Roman aristocrat who was eight months pregnant, died after being kicked in the abdomen. Her husband, Herodes, a wealthy and powerful Athenian orator, was tried for the killing but cleared, thanks to the influence of Marcus Aurelius. Pomeroy argues that he was guilty. She pieces together what is known, or can be deduced, about Regilla's life and death—with few exceptions, she notes, "the words of women in antiquity are not extant"—and provides an absorbing analysis of justice, society, culture, and customs in the second-century Roman Empire. Women had less standing in Athens than in Rome, and Herodes was a leader in an intellectual movement that sought to reassert the glories of Attic culture (and perhaps some of its misogyny) in the era of Roman rule. He was quick to erect monuments to his dead wife, but Pomeroy reads guilt in his haste and calls them "tantamount to a confession."

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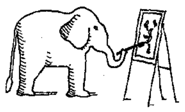

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THE THEATRE

MAD, BAD, AND RAD

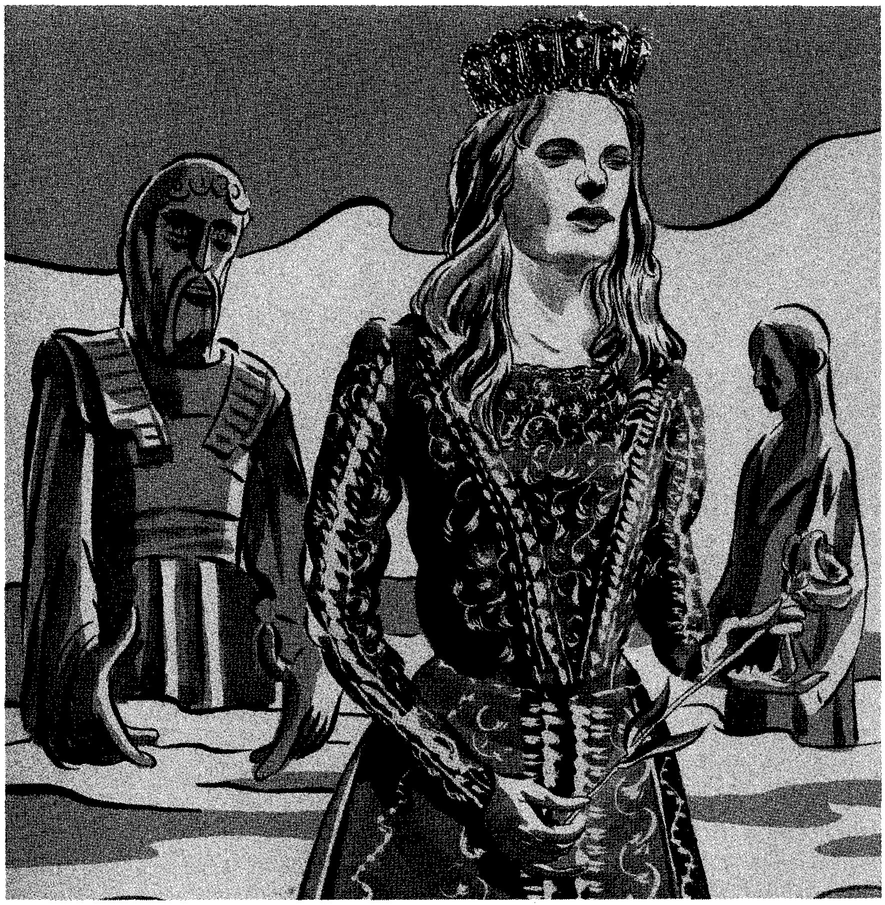
Rulers and rebels onstage.

BY JOHN LAHR

Toward the end of Shakespeare's 1610 romance "Cymbeline" (at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont, under the direction of Mark Lamos), while plot points ricochet around the stage as in some truly desperate episode of "Desperate Housewives," Jupiter descends on a golden eagle half the width of the stage to hurl a couple of thunderbolts. He tells the ghosts onstage to shut up; he assures them (and us) that the tribulations of the faithful Imogen (Martha Plimpton) and her banished, about-to-be-killed husband, Posthumus (Michael Cerveris), are over. "Be content," Jupiter says. "Your low-laid son our godhead will uplift:/His comforts thrive, his trials well are spent." No scholar has yet uncovered, among the Bard's papers, any use of the words "boffo" or "eleven-o'clock number"; however, Shakespeare's coup de théâtre—which showed off the technical capabilities of the new theatre at Blackfriars, into which his company, the King's Men, had moved in 1608—leaves no doubt about his commercial intentions. In this theatrical hodgepodge, which is neither tragedy nor comedy but tragical-historical-comical pastoral, Shakespeare fondly teases both the audience and the tropes of his masterly earlier plays: cross-dressing heroines, Machiavellian villains, the corrupt court versus the regenerating country, tyrannical kings and disaffected children. "Cymbeline" exudes the glow of the elegiac. Approaching the end of his career—he died in 1616—Shakespeare surveys the world and his own work with an affectionate detachment. As the beautiful song in the middle of the play says, "Golden lads and girls all must,/As chimney sweepers, come to dust."

A gilt frame around the proscenium arch at the Vivian Beaumont situates "Cymbeline" in the realm of fairy tale. Michael Yeargan's handsome sets—a galaxy of golden stars as a backdrop and a forest of gilded, emblazoned poles—have the fine filigree of book illustration. Brian MacDevitt's lighting, especially the impressionistic pastel colors of the forest floor, add to the play's gossamer atmosphere. The designers draw out the fabulous in the story and lend to the production a charisma that the ensemble, for the most part, fails to deliver. It's unfortunate for Lamos that he chose to introduce Cymbeline (John Cullum) and his kingship by reprising the prostrate kowtowing with which Trevor Nunn introduced King Lear in the recent celebrated Royal Shakespeare Company production. Cymbeline, who banishes Posthumus and treats his daughter cavalierly, may echo Lear's rashness, but he lacks the essential ingredient for tragedy: an inner life. When, at the finale, he learns from the court doctor that his late queen never loved him—that she "Married your royalty, was wife to your place,/Abhorr'd your person"—he treats the brutal revelation like a minor cavil. "Who is 't can read a woman?" he says, moving right along. "Is there more?" he adds.

"Cymbeline" 's verse, it seems to me, is remarkable for its lack of antithesis and of the drama that such contradiction brings to character. Shakespeare's intentions here have more to do with pageantry than with penetration. The play is a series of surface excitements, chock-full of piquant barbarity: rape, kidnapping, poisoning, beheading. The severed head belongs to the Queen's dim, fractious son, Cloten (the amusing Adam Dannheisser), a despised would-be suitor of Imogen. Onstage, Cloten's gory head is waved around like a handkerchief at the Harvard-Yale game; the ghoulish fun would have been more complete had the director remembered to put blood on the killer's sword.



Martha Plimpton as the princess Imogen in Shakespeare's "Cymbeline."

ZOHAR LAZAR

"Does the world go round?" Cymbeline asks at one point. Shakespeare's answer is yes. The accumulation of plot reversals, absurd coincidences, and neat explanations—they so galled George Bernard Shaw that he wrote "Cymbeline Re-finished" (1937)—work, in fact, to make a larger, more benevolent, and more paradoxical point about the human heart. The hand-wringing and the heartbreak here turn out to have been unwarranted. By the end of the evening, both the characters and the audience have known many sorrows, most of which, it seems, never happened at all.

At the finale of "Cymbeline," the King, in a spirit of forgiveness, mends the political fences between Britain and the Roman Empire, whose relations were jeopardized during the course of the play. "Although the victor, we submit to Caesar/And to the Roman Empire, promising/To pay our wonted tribute," he says. To reconcile with someone, you must acknowledge his demands. A failure to listen is part of the endless war that obsesses the prolific British playwright Howard Barker in his opaque but prescient allegorical 1991 radio play "A Hard Heart" (at the Clurman, under the direction of Will Pomerantz). In 1988, a group of British actors formed a company to perform Barker's plays and called it the Wrestling Club. Here, Barker wrestles with the thrill and the chill of destruction.

"I am lending my mind to the city. I am yielding to the city the quickest intellect within its boundaries," says Riddler (Kathleen Chalfant), an adviser to Praxis (Melissa Friedman), the queen of the besieged kingdom of Platea. "We have no allies and everything is running out," Praxis says. Riddler, a master of war who sees catastrophe as "an ecstasy of sorts," remains unfazed. "I've been under siege all my life," she replies. The enemy has built a wall right up against their city wall; each society refuses to see the other. Riddler's strategy is to build another, even higher wall behind the captured one. "Despair. Frustration. Bitterness," she says, spelling out the psychological effects on the enemy of rendering its achievement worthless. Over time, the palace, the streets, the gardens, even the temples are yielded up to Riddler's swaggering omnipotence and to her unsuccessful schemes.

The charm of Chalfant's intelligence gives Riddler's monstrousness an eerie credibility. "I did not make one error—even one—but—my mind was enginelike in its perfection," she says in the midst of a massacre. "Adamantine and impermeable," as Praxis calls her, Riddler insists upon her separation from others: her privacy, her silence, the "proper distance" of good manners. She becomes a wall just like the one she is building. Fearing the barbarians—"They will plow this place into the ground and plant thistle here"—she turns into one.

Although the writing in "A Hard Heart" is mysteriously powerful and doesn't seek to moralize, the production does. A series of epigrams from the play are mounted on blackboards outside the theatre for the audience to study before entering. We hate poetry that has designs upon us, Keats said. But why stop there? We also hate theatre that seeks to petition us, to lecture us, to turn theory into character and the life of the stage into a reading room. Rob Urbinati's "Rebel Voices" (at the Culture Project), which is based on Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove's "Voices of a People's History of the United States," announces itself in the program with an epigram about struggle and has the gall to call itself a play. In fact, it is a shabbily mounted, inadequately performed (the actors aren't even off book) compilation of contrarian pronouncements. One by one, yanked out of historical context, the renegade voices—Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Chief Joseph, Allen Ginsberg, Anne Moody, June Jordan, and Daniel Ellsberg among them—deliver their bright embers of outrage. In an 1852 Fourth of July speech, Frederick Douglass puts it to the white man: "There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States at this very hour." In 1991, June Jordan shivers the timbers of President George H. W. Bush: "But all of us who are weak, we watch you. And we learn from your hatred, and we do not forget. And we are ready, Mr. President. We are most of the people on this godforsaken planet." Good stuff. It gives the actors and the audience a chance to applaud their own liberal sympathies. Inevitably, the best buttonholing is achieved by singer-songwriters: Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, Patti Smith, and Steve Earle (who delivered his words in person the night I saw the show). The power of their anger lies not in reason but in joy. "Rebel Voices" doesn't so much have its fist in the air as its hand on its heart. You leave thinking, O.K., it's either struggle or buy the new Steve Earle album. ♦

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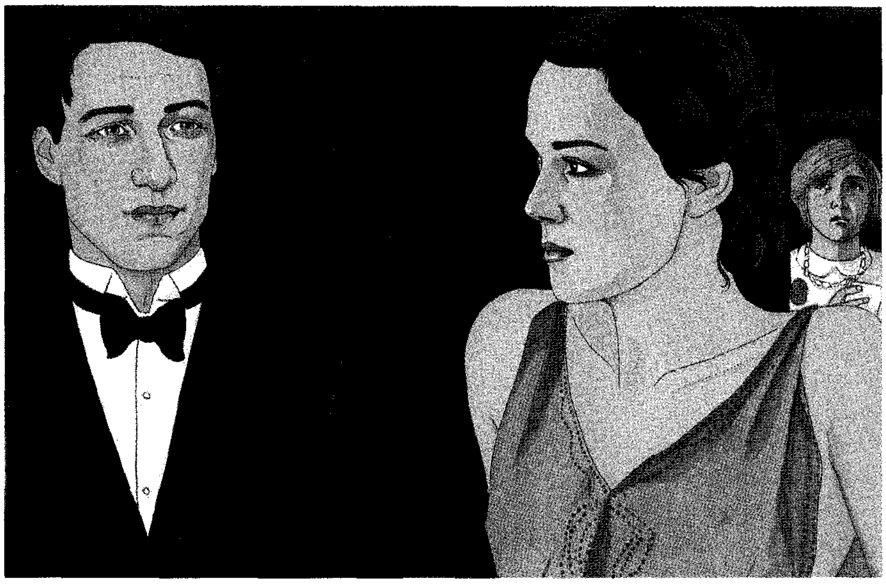
CONFLICTING STORIES

"Atonement."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Almost the first sound we hear in Joe Wright's "Atonement" is the tap of typewriter keys. Soon, the tapping becomes regular, like drumbeats, and it sets the tempo for the music that comes surging in. Later in the film, it rings out as loudly as gunshots. The implication is clear: words can stir us and set us dancing, but they can also kill. That mysterious double power infused Ian McEwan's novel, published in 2001, and it lingers in Christopher Hampton's screenplay, which displays immense ingenuity in facing a basic conundrum: how do you film a story about language and not leave it reeking of books?



James McAvoy, Keira Knightley, and Saoirse Ronan in Joe Wright's movie.

LARA TOMLIN

The first piece of literature we hear is a play by Briony Tallis (Saoirse Ronan), a thirteen-year-old girl—fair and blue-eyed, with a touch of the mad, bad fairy in her gaze. She is writing the play in an English country house in 1935, to be performed by her three unhappy cousins and, with any luck, to be watched by her older sister, Cecilia (Keira Knightley), whose life seems as unconstricting as her long silk skirt and loose, translucent blouse. Also hanging around, with an undecided future, is Robbie (James McAvoy), the housekeeper's son, who was put through college by Briony's father, as an act of charity, and who became, to an undefined extent, part of the Tallis clan. "I told him to join us tonight," Briony's brother Leon (Patrick Kennedy) says. Note the verb: Robbie was ordered to dinner, not asked.

In the heat of the day, through the flawed glass of an upstairs window—and so, as it were, through the defective vision of childhood—Briony watches her sister strip to her shift, next to an embarrassed Robbie, and plunge like a nymph into the fountain at the end of the lawn. We discover why, but Briony does not. Later, she bears a letter from Robbie to Cecilia: a note of apology, except that Robbie, fool that he is, writes two notes and by mistake sends the wrong one—an obscene declaration of desire, which Briony promptly reads. ("What's the *worst word* you can possibly imagine?" she asks her cousin.) Last, she finds her sister and Robbie making desperate love and, in her role as semi-innocent, misreads the act: "I caught him attacking my sister in the library." (Again, every deed is overseen by books.) When a genuine sexual assault, unconnected with either of the lovers, is committed that night, Briony, consumed by errors and the throb of her inventiveness, names Robbie as the guilty party. He is hauled away by the police.

We then jump five years—not four, as the film innumerately tells us—to the evacuation of Dunkirk. Robbie, released from jail to serve as a private soldier, is among the Allied troops in France awaiting embarkation from the beaches. (More than three hundred thousand men, most of them members of the retreating British Expeditionary Force, were eventually rescued: a national humiliation recast as a triumph of spirit and initiative, and thus an ominous backdrop to the smaller fabrications in this film.) He is gray with illness, helped along by a comrade-in-arms named Nettle (Daniel Mays)—a working-class Virgil to Robbie's Dante, with a mouthful of oaths, guiding him from one circle of horrors to the next. Some of these have swelled in the passage from novel to screen: what was, for McEwan, a single rotting corpse underfoot becomes for Wright and Hampton an orchard strewn with dead schoolgirls, each of them with a bullet hole in the brow. Are we so inured to shock these days, or so hard to convince, that only mass slaughter will suffice? The sense of overkill increases on the shore, where Wright's camera draws a deep breath and, in one unbroken shot, takes in the sights: a Ferris wheel, a figure exercising on a pommel horse, real horses being put down with a pistol, one squad of men running naked to the sea, another bawling hymns on a bandstand, and so on. All human life is here, and it's falling apart.

Ever since "Atonement" opened the Venice Film Festival in August, this sequence has been lauded for its skill, yet something feels wrong. You find yourself marking off the surreal details as they are ushered into view; compare it with another long take, Ray Liotta's famous procession through the club in "GoodFellas," and you feel that, where Scorsese was dramatizing the pomp of the empowered wiseguy, with his pontifical swagger, Wright is sowing the frame with incident for fear that it might lie fallow, and the result is that he risks merely drawing attention to his own style. This ties in with a general suspicion that "Atonement," as a story about stories, may be too self-conscious for its own good. You have to admire it, when so much of the competition seems inane and slack, but you can't help wondering, with some impatience, what happened to its heart.

Interleaved with Robbie's time in France are a number of scenes that show us how he got there, and what happened once the British troops returned. In a London tearoom, shortly before his departure, he meets Cecilia, who is working as a nurse, and the strange sensation that Wright has brewed up a colored and contorted version of David Lean's "Brief Encounter" (1945) is hard to dispel. Knightley and McAvoy press hands over the teacups with the same agonized formality as Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard, and Knightley's pure period accent (her pronunciation of "very" is halfway to "veddy") suddenly sounds as brittle as bone china—her home, she says, is "a tiny flet." Briony, too, has become a London nurse, but Cecilia can never forgive her for incriminating Robbie, and the sisters are estranged. Briony has grown into a tall, severe, not quite beautiful young woman (played by Romola Garai, who tamps down her customary lusciousness) with ambitions to be a novelist. She has a friend on the ward, Fiona (Michelle Duncan), whose giggling confession that "I couldn't marry anyone who wasn't in the Royal Navy" makes her, like Private Nettle, not just refreshingly bluff but oddly more credible than the complex major characters around her. When the wounded from France are stretchered into the hospital, Fiona crumples, whereas Briony looks stiff and stricken at the scale of human suffering. She tries to remain detached ("There is no Briony," the matron in charge declares), yet how can so much be borne, when the single act of cruelty that she herself inflicted, one day in 1935, will take a lifetime—and a life of writing—to redeem?

Such is the atonement of the title: an echo of the "sob of atonement" given by the governess in "The Turn of the Screw" as she kisses one of the children she so badly wishes to be innocent. Henry James's story, which sees that wish tested to appalling extremes, is a clear forerunner of McEwan's, and there is a fascinating, Jamesian intervention toward the end of Wright's film, where the elderly, dying Briony (Vanessa Redgrave) guides us, as Nettle guided Robbie, through the twists of what actually happened, back in the cauldron of war. It is time, she says, for "the absolute truth," yet even now there is a haze of evasion; in revealing the destinies of Robbie and Cecilia, she takes the opportunity to improve them—to touch them up with joy as she writes them down. This is a commonplace of mature narrative, and none the worse for it: the white-haired heroes of late Shakespeare, like Leontes and Pericles, enact it obsessively, as if to heal the child-harming wounds that both they and their tragic predecessors, from Shylock to Lear, have allowed to fester. Nothing is more insistent, in the artist's mind, than the will to transfigure the hellbent into the heaven-sent, and you can see the urge to make good writ large on Redgrave's impassioned face, and hear it in the softly troubled rasp of her voice. Just one problem: her last, beneficent lie made me look back over the expanse of the film and realize, to my dismay, that I hardly believed a word of it.

For a start, I didn't believe in Robbie. A young man seen pushing a wheelbarrow through the grounds of an estate, in 1935, does not get invited (or even told) to join the owners for dinner, whether or not he has a Cambridge scholarship; that is a liberal, postwar dream of what education could achieve, and of how it might dissolve the class divide. Beyond that, I didn't believe in the force of his love for Cecilia, or of hers for him; when they are sundered on a London street, it should be a sickening wrench, as it is in the novel, but here it passes off lightly, and, instead of weeping, you ask yourself whether the bus bearing Cecilia away would really have been that shiny. She herself is all surface, a perfect shell of English breeding, and, aside from the cut-grass green of her evening dress, the high blush of color on her cheekbones is almost her only index of palpable feeling; even the lush tones of her name—Thomas Tallis stands at the forefront of British composers, and Cecilia is the patron saint of music—are shortened by her family to the single note of Cee. If there is an instant at which "Atonement" flings off its cleverness long enough to stir the soul, it comes as Robbie writes his two letters, the polite and the pornographic, to the accompaniment of "La Bohème" on the gramophone. (He listens to the great Thomas Beecham recording, which wasn't made until 1956.) We cut to Cecilia at her dressing table, in front of the looking glass, with a cigarette, and, as the music bursts, we are struck not just by her beauty but by the deep, guilty secret of this equally beautiful, unsatisfying film: it's done with smoke and mirrors. ♦

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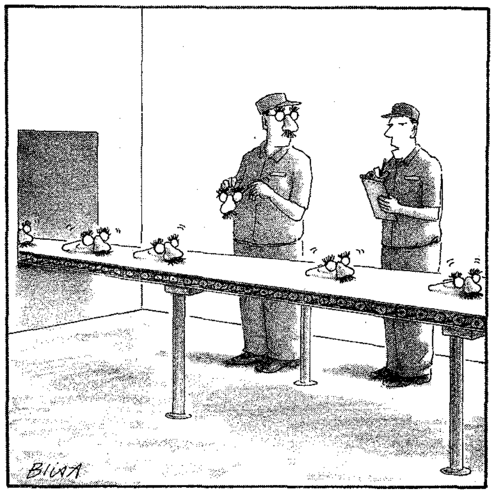
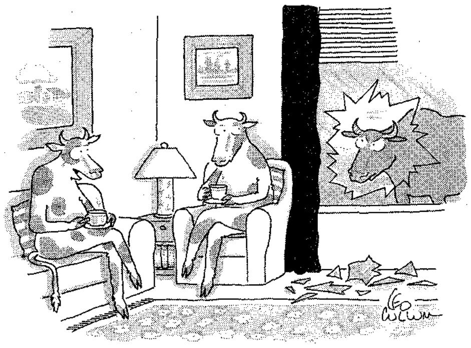
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Michael Crawford, must be received by Sunday, December 9th. Finalists in the November 26th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 24th & 31st issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Yeah, that one's funny, too. Next."
James Keegan, Milton, Del.



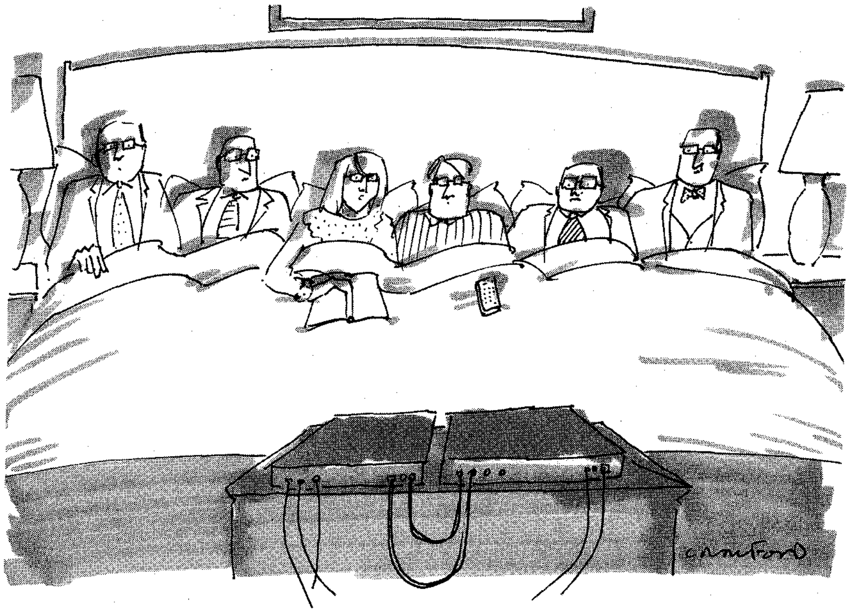
THE FINALISTS

"Have you thought about mauve?"
Katy Tracy, Rochester, N.Y.

"You should be happy. How many husbands even notice window treatments?"
Lawrence Wood, Chicago, Ill.

"You should see him on Valentine's Day."
Jennifer Just, Woodbridge, Conn.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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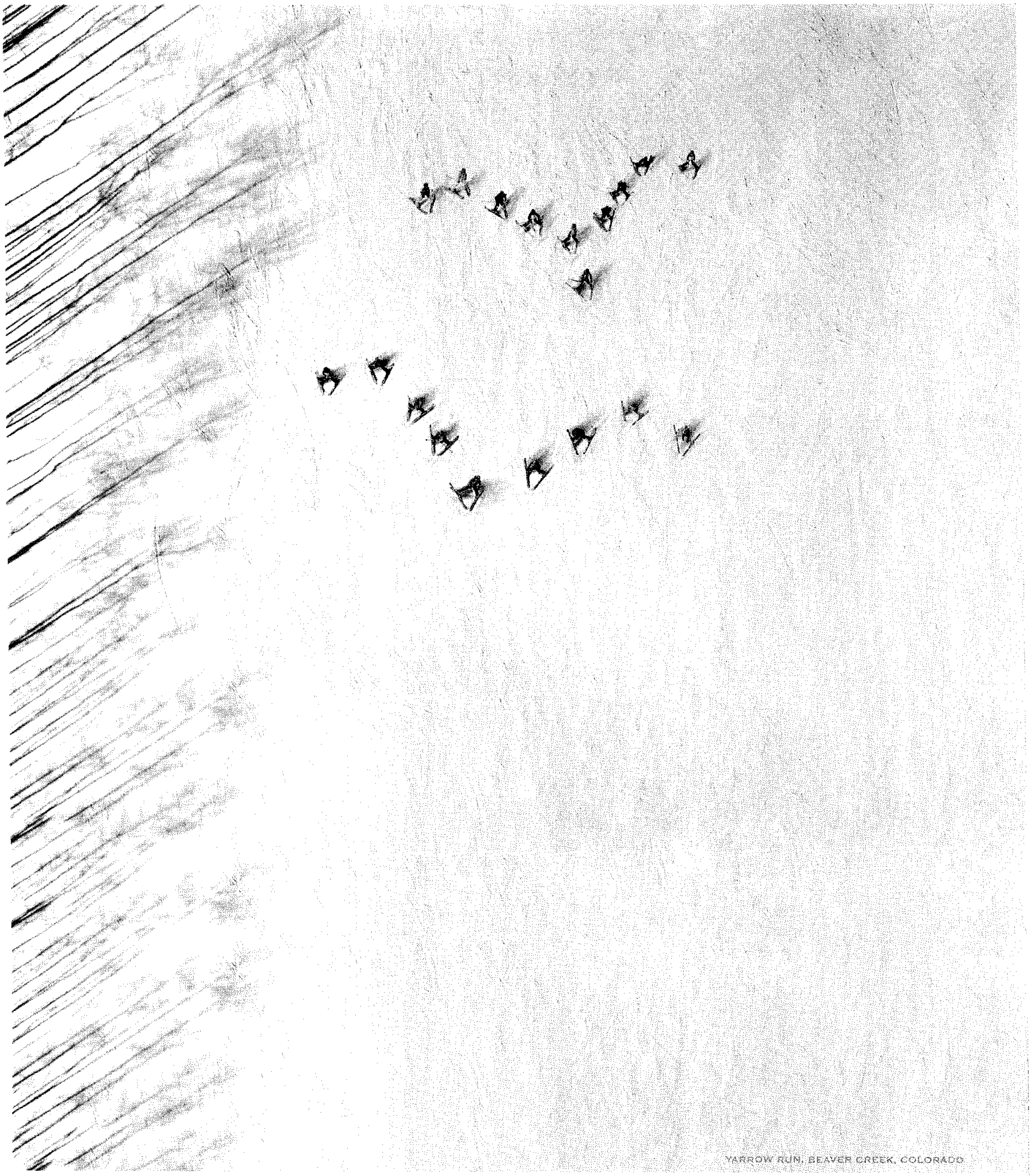
The MIGRATION OF THE EASTERN THIRD GRADER.



YARROW RUN, BEAVER CREEK, COLORADO

Beaver Creek. *Not exactly roughing it.*

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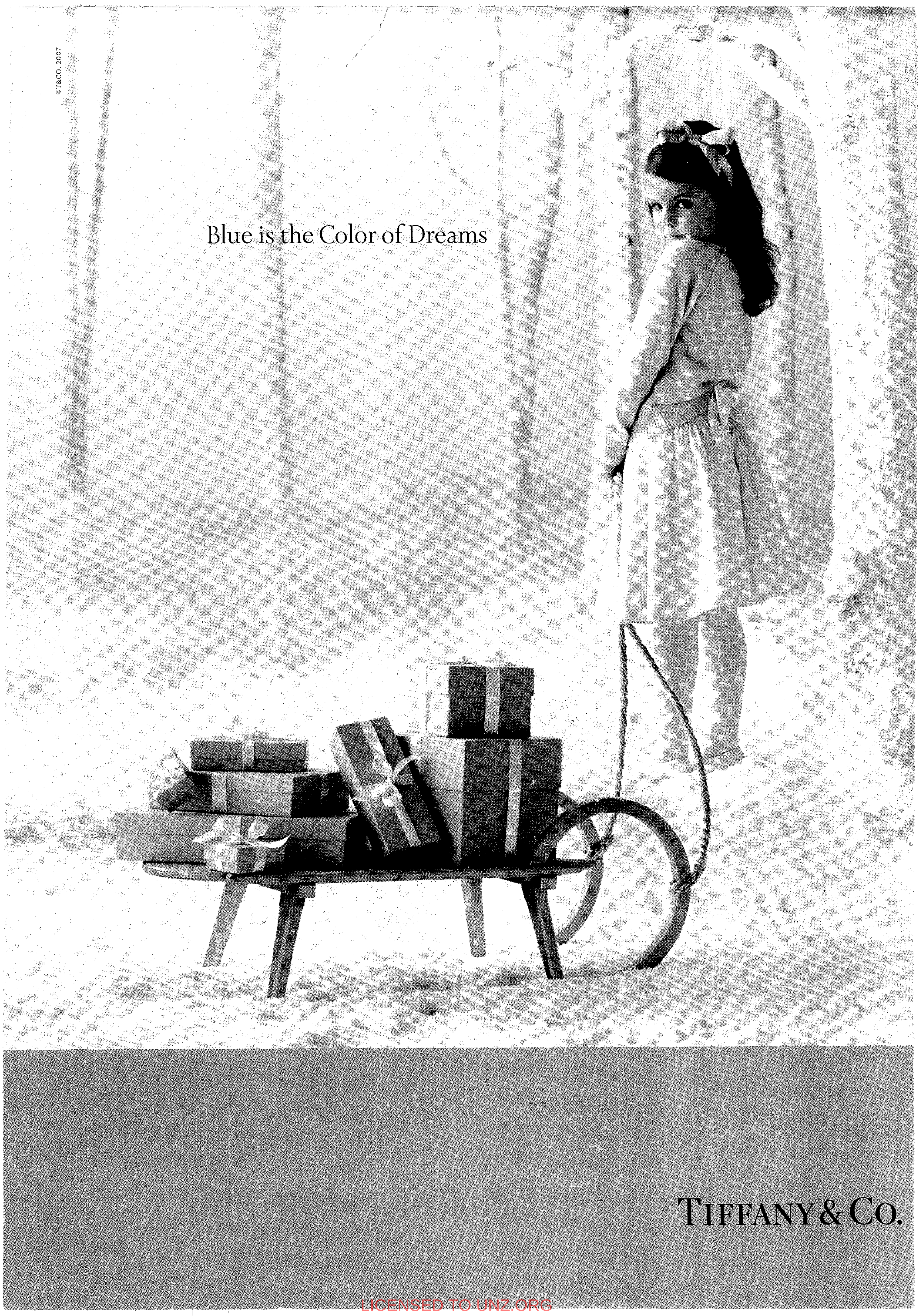
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